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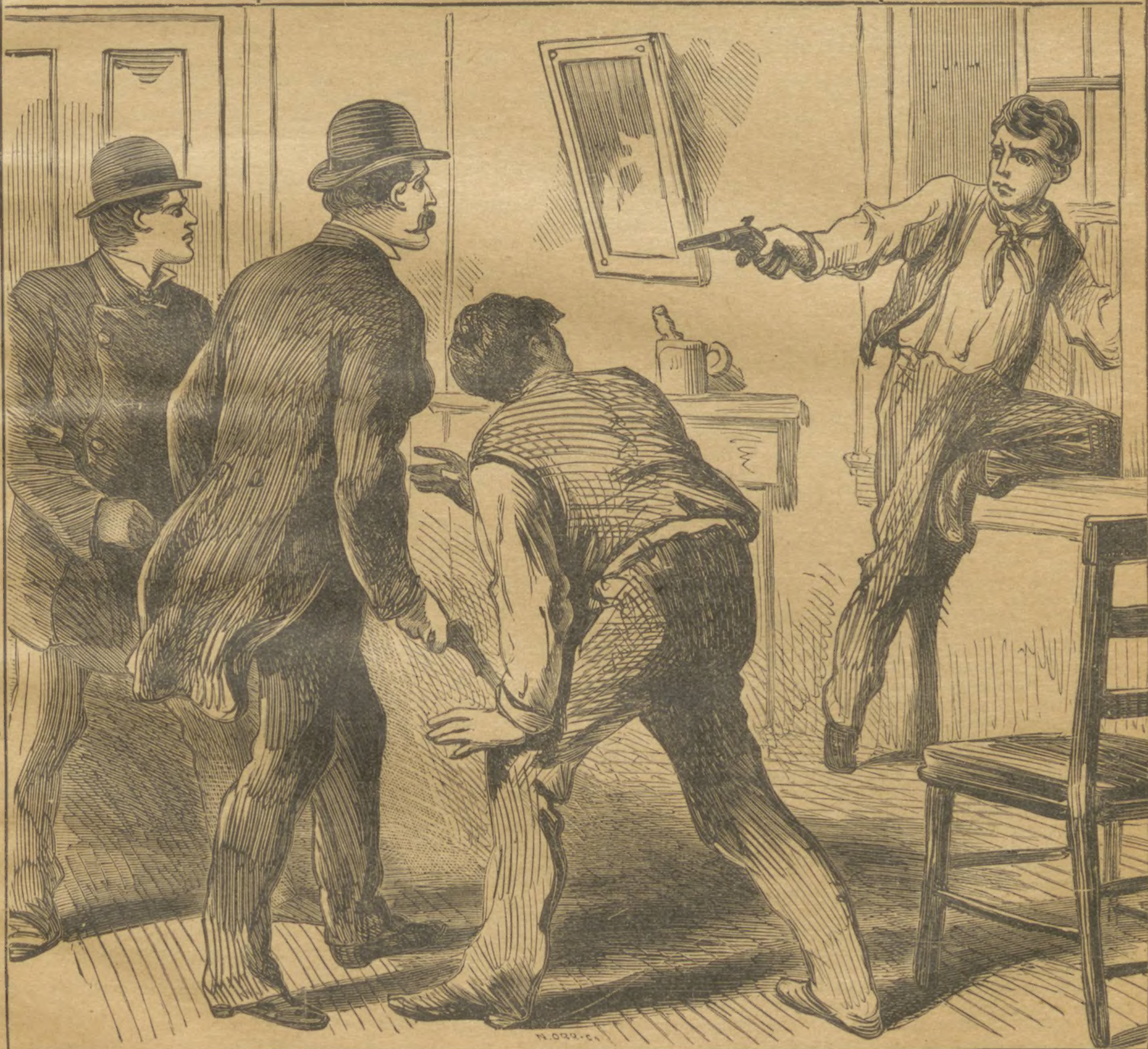
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Vol. LXXIV.

BY A. P. MORRIS,
AUTHOR OF "DETECTIVE
FLEET," ETC.

THE DEMON DWARF

Or, SAVED FROM
A FRIGHTFUL DOOM.



"NOT YET, MY HEARTIES! COME ON, TAKE ME IF YOU CAN!"

THE
Demon Dwarf's Ally;

OR,

**Eavesdropper Faerot's Right Hand
Man.**

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR

CHAPTER I.

YTOL AND WHARLE.

"Fled now the sullen murmurs of the North,
The splendid raiment of the Spring peeps
forth."

—BLOOMFIELD.

I thank thee, God, for weal and woe
And whatso'er the trial be;
'Twill serve to wean me from below,
And bring my spirit nigher Thee."

—COOK.

WINTER with its deep snows had gone.

The last of the dreary months had passed away; the bright days were at hand—beautiful above, and the bosom of the earth seemingly glowing with joy.

Far along the rippling Chesapeake skimmed innumerable white-winged yachts. The woody banks on either side appeared to be striving to burst more rapidly the tender leaf-buds of the half-seared branches locked in naked domes; and the new spring carols of the birds echoed merrily out over the gilded waters.

No matter where exactly—but somewhere near the historic ground of the Bay there stood a tall farm-house. It was the same familiar picture of the old-time country-home; plain and comfortable, combining the livelier spirit of the North with the don't-care leisure look of the Southern farmstead.

There was the great monster of a barn, with its wind-mill weathervane; healthy cows in the broad pen; poultry fluttering everywhere; utensils neatly shedded; horse-stamping in their clean stalls; the unused winding path that led down to the crystal spring; the spectral trees bordering the smooth lane, up to the well swept porch; and all around a strange air of quietude, only broken by the creaky squeaking of the pump-handle and the mysterious murmurs of such surroundings.

It was Sabbath morning.

In the long sitting-room sat Farmer Lyn, dressed in his tidy best, with gold spectacles carefully adjusted over his fat nose—partly engaged with reading the paper he had brought home the day before, and part with wondering what kept Mother Lyn so much longer than usual in getting ready for church.

Close to the Lyn farm was a thriving little place, which we will call Bud Villa; and the bell of its chapel was already pealing forth, penetrating to the cozy sitting-room, and adding to Herbert Lyn's uneasiness.

He was held in high esteem by the villagers, and, unlike his neighbor Dufour, of the adjoining farm, was noted for his open, friendly nature.

Presently his wife entered, scrupulously attired and looking exceedingly meek.

"Hush!" he grunted. "Ready at last."

"Couldn't come sooner!" she snapped, in a voice that betrayed a disposition widely at variance with the mildness of her face.

He glanced at her over his spectacles.

"The bell has been ringing this long while."

"I heard it," short again, adding: "It was that vixen's fault."

"What did Ytol do?"

"Stole one of my shoestrings—the vixen!"

"Ytol wouldn't steal, Mother Lyn—"

"She would!"

"I say she wouldn't."

"Father Lyn!—how dare you contradict me?"

"Ytol asked for a shoe-string early this morning, and I heard you tell her to get one wherever she could find it."

"She's a vixen, I say!" persisted Mother Lyn, growing angry. "Oh, you needn't begin to defend her—I'm used to that. You always take her part. But she's a vixen, and thief, too!"

"No, she's not. Ytol is a good girl. You'll

be sorry for your treatment of her one of these days."

"Oh, I suppose you think so," with a ghastly, ironical smile. "Never!—do you hear that? I hate her! I always did hate her! I always will—"

"Silence!" he growled, with a stamp of his foot. "A fine mood you are in to go to church."

"My mood's my own, and I'll do as I please. Don't you understand—"

"There, there, now," suddenly, and waving his hand. "That'll do. I've heard all that too often."

"And you'll hear it again, whenever you defend her—the brat! I tell you I always did hate—"

"Silence, I say!"

Rebecca Lyn shut her teeth with a snap, and her little gray eyes glittered fierily. But she said nothing further and followed her husband out to the door where the wagon was in waiting.

As they emerged from the house they were met by a young girl of not much more than sixteen years, who was carrying a pail full of white, fresh milk.

She was a lovely being, with long, golden, wavy hair, deep, soulful eyes of blue, and angelic face. For one of her age, she was exquisitely developed, and there was a timid, coyful mien about her that made her seem more charming.

At sight of her, Mother Lyn's face reddened.

"You vixen!" she screamed, darting forward.

But the strong arm of Farmer Lyn held her back.

"Here—get in!" he said sternly, pushing her toward the wagon.

She yielded with some struggling; and Herbert Lyn, with a kind glance at the startled girl, drove off.

"I'll thrash her when I get back!" vowed Mrs. Lyn, spitefully.

"You've 'thrashed' that child too much, Mother Lyn."

"And why shouldn't I? Haven't I had the care and bother of her ever since she was an imp of a baby? If it hadn't been for me, she'd be good for nothing."

Farmer Lyn looked sideways at his wife in a manner that plainly said:

"If you had dealt more kindly with her, and taught her to love and not fear you, she would be twice as valuable to us as she is."

And Rebecca Lyn, in her own mind:

"Wait till I get hold of her! I'll skin her alive—the vixen!"

This pretty little fairy, this shy creature upon whom Mother Lyn heaped her hate, was Ytol—gentle, suffering Ytol—whose existence was void of all those sweets which have made the childhood days of others dearest in the pictures of memory.

She was not their child. A helpless waif, that one night came to the cheery fireplace in baby-garments and with large, wondrous eyes that stared at them bewilderedly.

The farmer and his wife had lost three children. Loneliness had settled in their home; there was a vacuum that each felt keenly. When the tiny cherub crossed the threshold—nameless and in rags—Herbert Lyn's great heart went out to it in a warm affection, and he hoped that it might fill up the blank occasioned by the loss of his own offspring.

But Rebecca Lyn did not partake of his consolation. On the contrary, she seemed inspired at once by a causeless dislike; and ever since it could bear a whipping, she had not spared it, even for the most trivial offense.

Ytol received her name from Herbert Lyn. Everything—what little of it there was—that could lighten her torturous lot was of his bestowing; and his kindness toward the friendless one served to incense his wife still further in her malignant treatment of the child.

Poor Ytol! She worked hard, early and late, on the farm; she did all in her power to win just one softly-uttered word from her persecutor; but the years and years went on, from her eighth birthday, with the same routine of wearying labor and the same harsh, unmerited censures and abuses from Rebecca Lyn.

After the wagon turned out at the gate, Ytol set her pail of milk on the ground; then

she sunk to her knees and hid her face in her apron.

She was feeling more than ever sad on that Sabbath morn. She had been weeping while milking in the stall; and now she bowed there in utter dejection, wondering—for the first time, perhaps—if this was to be her life always.

"Ytol! Ytol!"

Pattering footsteps sounded on the sward behind her. Some one was running up.

"Ytol! Ytol!"

It was a boyish voice that called; Ytol's heart gave a bound as she sprung to her feet.

For a second the sad look vanished, and there was a sweet, glad smile instead.

"Wharle? is it you?" she cried.

He was a youth about three years older than she. His face was handsome and manly, and his eyes of brown were full of life, fun and tenderness, twinkling beneath the rim of his broad-brimmed soft hat.

In a moment she was in his arms.

"Yes, Ytol; you know I said I was coming as soon as the folks were out of the way, and—why, you've been crying!"

"Oh, Wharle, I feel so unhappy!"

"Has Mother Lyn been tormenting you again?"

"No more than usual. But, Wharle, I never felt so miserable as I feel to-day; I'm so glad to see you."

"Never mind," he said, kissing her red lips heartily; "we'll run to our nook for a while and have a good talk. Hey? Come! I've got leave of absence from home this morning, and we'll have a gay time."

"I can't; there's all the things to fix."

"Then I'll help you. Let's be quick."

And into the house they went, where Ytol's duties were so many to perform.

With the assistance of her boy lover Ytol was soon free. Then they started off toward their favorite trysting-place, leaving old Carlo, the shaggy Newfoundland, to guard the premises.

It was on a high hill overlooking the sparkling waters, amid a bower of stunted pine and cedar that in summer-time was rich and dreamy with the spice of wild flowers and vocal with the songs of birds.

Here they sat down, and Wharle Dufour drew close to her side.

"Come, cheer up, Ytol, and talk to me."

"I can't," she said in a mournful voice; "I feel so sad."

"But you must—"

"Oh, Wharle!" throwing her arms round his neck and gazing full into his face, "I do wonder if I am always to be so unhappy? You don't know what a home mine is. I sometimes feel as if I wanted to die."

"Hush!—hush! Haven't I told you, Ytol, that it is wicked to think that way? We have no right to wish ourselves dead. Whatever trials are put upon us by the Great Being who gave us life, we must strive to submit to them humbly. We may rest assured there will come something in the end to soothe our pain. Don't talk of dying."

She listened attentively to the young lover, and her head bowed low.

"No, Ytol," he continued, after a pause, "it will not always be so. If you can only bear it a little longer, your life will change. I will soon be of age, and my own master. Father will then give me a good piece of land. And haven't I promised you that I'll build a snug house and put you in it for my wife—my queen? It will be love then, dear Ytol; love from day to day, without ceasing, and I'll work and work all I know how to make you comfortable."

"How long?" questioned the girl, looking up, while the light of hope brightened her face.

"Two years."

"Two years? So long as that?"

Ytol thought of what she must endure throughout that time. But she thought, too, of the future her chosen one had so often painted, and she was resigned; she would wait, and nurse his promises deep down in her heart, to strengthen and sustain her in her sorest moments.

"You will wait for me those two years, Ytol?"

"Oh, yes."

"And be true?"

"Yes, Wharle. Why, I have nobody in the wide world to love but you. And, wha

would I have been had I not met you? I owe everything to you—you have been so kind. You know that Mother Lyn would never let me go to school; and you taught me all I know—how to write and how to read the letters you sometimes drop at the milestone, when you can't come to me. Girl though I am, I have a woman's heart in me. But for you, I should not have known my God—how to worship him, and pray that in his mercy he may soften Mother Lyn's heart. You taught me what love is—and you won all I possessed. Whatever little sunlight has been in my sad life, you have sown there; and oh! Wharle! Wharle! *don't* ever let any one steal your love from me!"

With the last her arms tightened, and she clung to him as if in a sudden fear of losing him.

"I repeat my vow to you, Ytol: 'Nothing shall separate us. You shall be my wife, though the whole world stand against us.' Wharle Dufour's heart does not and never will know any love but yours."

She nestled trustingly in the arms that embraced her, and his speech calmed her wonderfully.

It was high noon before the young lovers awakened from the sweet dream in which they became wrapt.

Ytol was first to remember her danger in remaining away from the farm-house; and when she marked how time had flown, the old dread of Mother Lyn's wrath began to prey upon her.

"Good-by, Wharle; I must go now."

"Good-by. And, Ytol—strive to bear all for a little while. Remember, it is for my sake."

"For your sake, dear, dear Wharle!"

He snatched a hurried kiss, and in a moment she had bounded from his arms and was gliding swiftly away.

For a long time he stood watching her receding form, then he too turned homeward.

"Oh, why am I not a man!" burst from his lips.

The exclamation was from his very soul.

The two had scarce disappeared, when the clump of cedars was pushed apart and a man emerged from behind the screen of bushes.

He was short and stout, miserably ragged, with bloodshot and distended eyes, and wearing a beard of red and gray. The cast of his countenance was extremely repulsive, made more so by a broad grin that displayed a set of yellow teeth.

"Hal! hal! hal!" he chuckled, gutturally; "it's the same strange fate. Once more a Dufour vows to marry one whose lovers never leave them. Hal! hal! And that's little Wharle, eh?—a chit when I saw him last. What will Gerald Dufour say when he hears of it? Let it go on—and stop it who can. It's fate—fate. But, I must make Bud Villa. It's been a long time since Hoyle Yarik, the tar of the 'Gipsy Queen,' saw the place; so stir your stumps, my hearty!"

He sauntered onward with a rolling gait—the grin still upon his visage, and muttering and shaking his head as he went.

CHAPTER II.

OLD FRIENDS NOT WELL MET.

"I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life."

—SHAKESPEARE.

" * * * * * Methinks it sounds
As though some heavy footstep followed me,
I will advance no further."

—BAILLIE.

BUD VILLA had long boasted of its purity, that is, it had been free from liquor stores, and the consequent dangerous characters which infest those establishments, and make surroundings hideous with their revelries and brawls.

But, "a change came o'er the spirit of *this* dream" at last, and the advent of an individual with a suspiciously-colored nose—whose name was Jeremy Coddle—was shortly followed by the erection of a post, before one of the larger more central houses, and on the post swung a sign bearing the ominous word:

TAVERN.

For about six years Jeremy drove a thriv-

ing trade; the scowls of teetotalers to the contrary notwithstanding. At the opening of our story he had grown fat over success, and settled down to an easy indifference toward the world at large.

Jeremy Coddle had no cronies in Bud Villa. He rather shunned an acquaintance with those with whom he had contact, and it was not long before he wove around himself an atmosphere of mystery, by his reticent mood and retired life. He perceived the curiosity he created, but he only chuckled to himself and continued to serve his bar-room customers with the exterior of a stoic.

The equanimity of Coddle was destined to a lurch. On the Monday morning following the Sunday of our previous chapter, he was confronted by an old and significant acquaintance.

The tavern-keeper was lounging lazily around his bar-room, puffing contentedly at his meerschaum pipe, when the double doors were kicked open, and his first caller for the day entered.

It was the rough-dressed, rough-visaged fellow whom we have seen eavesdropping at the tryst of the child-lovers.

"Good-morning—good-morning, sir," Coddle said, waddling behind his counter.

The comer just nodded his head jerkily, and fastened his bleary eyes on the corpulent proprietor in searching gaze.

Something about the man struck Jeremy as familiar. He scanned the other's face closely, and the more he tried to identify him the more puzzled he became.

"Well, sir; what will you have?"

"Hello, Je-re-my! how are you? Let's have some of the same old stuff!"

The pipe dropped from Coddle's mouth. The voice of the shabby man told him who it was, and the recognition could not have been very pleasant, for he stared, turned pale, seemed speechless.

"I say, how are you?—blast your teeth! Didn't you hear me?" repeated and demanded this individual, in a tone that was grating. "Didn't expect to see me round again, did you?"

"Hoyle Yarik!—'tisn't you?"

"'Tisn't, eh? Well, maybe not, since Hoyle Yarik was sent to prison for life, and ought to be there now. But, Je-re-my—blast my teeth! I'm here."

He rocked from side to side a couple of times as he delivered himself—twisted his shaggy head, pushed back his greasy hat, bit a fresh chew of tobacco from his plug, then rammed both hands in his pockets, and surveyed Coddle with wolfish complacency.

Jeremy betrayed a singular nervousness in the presence of this Hoyle Yarik. His features grew very white; he moved restlessly.

"Where did you come from?" he stammered out.

"Where? Well, I reckon you know I'm a jail-bird?—one on the fly."

"A jail-bird!" Coddle shifted his position unsteadily.

"Yes. You see, Je-re-my, I kinder broke out. I've been through *some*, I have; and I've done some tall gallopin' lately."

"When did you get away?" Jeremy inquired, in agitation, and glancing fearfully toward the window.

"Well, about a month ago. I've been running all over the country with the law at my heels—running like mad; and the detectives haven't let me rest much."

"Detectives?" Jeremy's face grew paler still.

"Yes. They're after me pretty close. Maybe they're in Bud Villa now."

"Oh, Lord!"

"Don't get scared, Je-re-my; it's no use. Hand out that whisky."

"But, Hoyle—my dear Hoyle,"—serving the liquor tremblingly, "please keep right on. Don't stop in Bud Villa. Go to Canada."

"I sha'n't go a mile further," declared Yarik, gulping down the fiery drink.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Coddle again.

The ragged man made his hat slide to the extreme back of his unkempt head, and stood statue-like with his limbs apart and his distended eyes riveted on the frightened tavern-keeper.

"And I'm going to stop right in this house, Je-re-my," he added, tipping forward on his toes, and raising his body with emphasis.

"Hoyle!—my dear Hoyle! You'll be the ruin of me."

"Boo! Now *don't* get scared, Je-re-my."

"But you will— Ha! Oh, Lord! It's too late. Here comes some one. Get into the back room. Quick, Hoyle—quick!"

Yarik heard a quick step on the porch. It was evident that he did not wish to be seen at present, for he promptly obeyed Jeremy's imploring voice and hastened into the rear apartment.

"The devil hasn't got him yet!" run in Coddle's brain when the door closed on his unwelcome visitor. "Six years in jail—and now he's loose again. If he's found in this house, I'm a ruined man. Whatever brought him back? Why didn't he die in prison? And he'll want his money—and I can't spare it. What infernal luck! How can I get rid of him?"

The second comer was a tall, powerful man, of dark complexion, keen eyes and stern mien.

He called for a glass of wine, and then stood leaning idly against the counter while he sipped the sparkling beverage in a thoughtful way.

Jeremy saw that he was a stranger. While he adjusted things behind the counter, with trembling hands, wondering who it could be, and preyed upon by thoughts of the shabby visitor in the next room, this party interrupted his unpleasant reflections with:

"My name is Duvique."

Jeremy whirled round.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Duvique—yes—very glad. Been long hereabouts?"

"I am a detective," he added, ignoring the question.

Coddle's face reddened, and his heart began to thump.

Hoyle Yarik, peering through the keyhole, looked savage and exclaimed, clinching his fist:

"You lie!—blast your teeth!"

"A detective? Oh, yes—yes, you're a detective. Good business." Coddle squirmed and bowed, though his spirit was sinking with dread.

"I am in search of an escaped convict," went on the quiet, frowning, muscular stranger, as if he was purposely terrifying his listener by bits.

"You don't say! After a convict!" exclaimed the tavern-keeper, with a show of innocence that cost his every energy.

"Haven't seen any suspicious characters round here, have you?"

"No, no, no; haven't seen any at all. On my honor. Never thought of such a thing."

"I think the rogue is in Bud Villa. But you need not feel alarmed, landlord—if he is a cut-throat."

"Oh, no; I wouldn't be afraid of him, if I was to meet him," said the tavern-keeper, bravely.

"Innocent Je-re-my!" chuckled Yarik, who was listening.

"I think he's pretty close, though"—in a peculiar tone. "He might get into some house; and for all we know, he may be hiding in that very room there," with a nod behind him.

"Blast his teeth!" growled Yarik, glancing round for means of exit in case of emergency.

"He said that as if he had his eye on me."

"Impossible, I assure you. He couldn't come in without my seeing him," Jeremy hastened to say, feeling as if he depended over a magazine.

"If I catch him, I have orders to arrest both him and the parties sheltering him."

"I hope you'll nab him soon."

"You do, do you?—blast your teeth!" muttered Yarik, scowling.

"Beautiful day, isn't it?" carelessly.

"Beautiful!" blurted Coddle, whose face was white as death.

The stranger paid for his drink, and sauntered slowly out. Pausing a moment on the porch, he moved off down the street.

Jeremy watched him well away; then he rushed to the back room.

But he who called himself Duvique did not go far. He turned about and retraced his steps, passing around to the rear of the building.

"By Heaven! he's in that house. I'll swear it, by the actions of the landlord. Even if I am mistaken, I must not risk a miss. Ah! let me enter here."

There was a door opening into a narrow

entry, and he passed through this, and ascended the stairway beyond, tiptoeing stealthily.

"I would not lose the opportunity," he continued, lowly, to himself. "Hoyle Yarik is the only living being who can place me on the right track—give me the clue to the whereabouts of the lost child."

Jeremy was excited when he burst into the apartment containing the convict.

"Hoyle! Hoyle! it's a detective. Fly! Leave my house. Save me from destruction. If you're found here I'm ruined. Oh, Lord!"

Yarik scowled blackly. He grasped the tavern-keeper by the collar, jerked him into the room, and closed the door.

"Sit down!" he growled. "I want to have a talk."

Coddle sunk helplessly into a chair. It was plain that he feared Hoyle Yarik. He trembled and shook, and sat stiff in his seat as if pinned there.

Yarik dragged a chair forward to the table, settled it with a jar, threw himself into it, and eyed the other threateningly.

"So, you hope he'll nab him soon?"

"Now, Hoyle"—whiningly, "you know that was only put on—"

"It was, eh? Sounded awful sincere, Je-re-my."

"I didn't mean it; you know I didn't mean it, my dear Hoyle."

"All right, then. I was going to stick you with this knife"—displaying a gleaming dirk—"but, since it was 'put on,' why, I'll let it pass."

At sight of the dirk, Coddle shrunk backward. His mind was filled with terror.

"Je-re-my, that wasn't any detective."

"En?"

"The correct 'handle' of that liar is Paul Faerot."

"No? You don't tell me!" Jeremy's trepidation relaxed somewhat, and he evinced an interest.

"Paul Faerot came to me when I was in prison. He offered me my liberty—that is, he said he'd help me to escape—if I'd tell him what I knew about the lost daughter of David Dane. You know old David that once was—eh, Je-re-my?" and he laughed and leered meaningly.

Coddle shuddered.

"Don't mention David Dane, my dear Hoyle—please don't."

"Kinder reminds you of old habits, does it Je-re-my?"

"Now, my dear Hoyle—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" a harsh, guttural chuckle. "Well, I won't remind you of your old ways. But you deserved hanging long ago, Je-re-my; and you know it. But, of this Paul Faerot: I got out without his help."

"Oh!"

"Consequently, he didn't get his information."

"Yes—"

"I say no!" interrupted Yarik, sharply.

"That's what I mean, my dear Hoyle—that's what I mean; no," whined Coddle, anxious not to excite the ill-humor of his convict visitor.

"I didn't need the help of this Paul Faerot."

"And how did you escape?" asked Coddle, with a timid breath.

"Stabbed my jailer with a dinner-knife; then made a bold dash. I stole a horse and showed his bottom, and have lived on farm poultry for some months. Romantic, eh, Je-re-my? Very romantic."

Jeremy slid back in his chair to escape the bony, claw-like hand that outstretched toward him. The hand gripped on Coddle's knee, where it tightened until he squirmed with pain.

"I say it was romantic, Je-re-my."

"Romantic!" screamed Coddle, wild with agony; and Yarik released him.

"I haven't set eyes on Paul Faerot—until to-day—since he came to my cell, where I was learning a shoemaker's trade," pursued the shabby villain. "And now, Je-re-my, what I want to know is: why does Paul Faerot want to know anything about the lost daughter of David Dane?"

"I give it up, Hoyle; I really can't imagine," returned Coddle, dolefully, as he rubbed the spot where Yarik's vise-of-a-hand had clinched on him. "I'll swear I never even saw this Paul Faerot before." And inwardly: "Curse that hand of his! his fingers

are like pincers, and his strength is equal to that of two men!"

Just then a bell rung. It was a summons from one of the upper rooms.

"There's my boarders wanting something," Coddle said, rising with alacrity, and glad of an opportunity for momentary release.

"Got boarders, Je-re-my?" watching the bell that swayed on its springs against the wall.

"Well—two. A man and a girl. There's something mighty queer about 'em, Hoyle. One's a gal about seventeen years old—but, Lord! she's just as much a woman as if she was thirty. The other's as ugly a specimen as ever lived. He's a dwarf who looks like Satan himself. The two are traveling together. Wait a minute. My hired boy's down at the post-office, and I'll have to—"

Jingle!—jing!—jing! jing! jing! went the bell a second time.

Coddle hurried up-stairs, leaving Yarik to impatiently await his return.

CHAPTER III.

AT BAY.

WE enter one of the rooms occupied by the couple mentioned.

Reclining on a lounge was a girl—hardly more than a child—surprisingly fair, and wearing a woman's face. Her eyes were brown, keenly lustrous; her long lashes and delicate brows were dark, and her hair was in masses of flaxen gold, banded back from the temples. Her glance was that of one familiar with the world and human nature.

Her companion was a man of advanced years; a dwarf, with a hump on his back, a stoop to his body, a set scowl in his visage—the latter unearthly in its mold. His hair was long, knotting over his shoulders, and matting in tangles on his low forehead. His arms—narrow-sleeved and bowed at his side—hung disproportionately downward; and over cheeks, chin and throat a prickly beard stood out neglectedly.

The girl had registered at the tavern as Dwilla St. Jean. The dwarf had written a single name: "Catdjo."

She arose when Coddle made his appearance.

"Ah! Mr. Coddle, I am glad you answered the ring. I have a favor to ask."

"Any thing I can do," said the tavern-keeper, with a profound bow.

"A man came into your house awhile ago?"

"Yes," bowing again.

"I want you to send him up to me."

"That's impossible, Miss—"

"How impossible?"

"He's gone."

Dwilla frowned.

"Pah! I don't mean that one. I want to see the shabby villain-of-a-man who is down-stairs, in your back room, this minute."

Coddle's trembling renewed.

"But you must be mistaken, Miss—"

"Catdjo saw him go in there. He was spying, by my orders. It is Hoyle Yarik, who escaped from prison a short time since. Don't be alarmed, sir; I know him well. I have business with him. Send him up to me, please."

"Now, then," thought Coddle, with a shiver, "these must be detectives also. And I'm a ruined man. Curse Hoyle Yarik!" And aloud:

"Well, miss, since you—"

"Yes. Be quick. We have been chasing him from the time he escaped; we must not miss him, at any hazard. Tell him your boarders have important business with him, Mr. Coddle."

"Chasing him!" flashed through Coddle's startled mind. "Yes, they are detectives. I'm ruined." And aloud again:

"But, miss, I don't think—"

"Please be quick, Mr. Coddle, and never mind what you 'don't think.' Tell Hoyle Yarik that we wish to see him, and that he has nothing to fear from us. He can be benefited by the interview if he chooses."

"If he has nothing to fear, then they can't be detectives. I'm safe," argued Coddle, mentally; and then:

"I'll tell him, miss."

When the tavern-keeper was gone, Dwilla turned to the Dwarf.

"Catdjo!"

He approached, gazing intently at her with his wild, vacant eyes.

"It was fortunate that you saw this man, Catdjo. And you still feel sure that, from him, we can gain the information we want?"

The Dwarf nodded, but did not speak.

"And this other party—Paul Faerot. We have seen that he is also in Bud Villa. I am perplexed, Catdjo. What can he want with knowledge of David Dane's daughter?"

Catdjo shook his head. He was a mute.

"If we should succeed with Hoyle Yarik," Dwilla pursued, "we must remember anew our vows. Look, Catdjo!—look once more on the picture."

She drew a large daguerreotype from her bosom and held it up to view.

With her action his face assumed a perfect hideousness. He glared like a demon on the thing, and his teeth ground and gritted with sudden passion.

A nameless cry came from his lips; he bounded forward as if to snatch it from her.

But Dwilla withdrew it beyond his reach, and secreted it in her dress.

At the same time she cried:

"Catdjo!—quick! The porch. Some one is eavesdropping."

The rear window of the apartment opened on a long porch that was accessible by all the rooms in that portion of the house. Dwilla had detected a transient shadow on the blind.

Catdjo sprang past her with lightning quickness, and glanced out.

But, rapid as was his movement, the flesh of the shadow was out of sight before the Dwarf reached the sill.

It was the mysterious Paul Faerot! He vanished into one of the adjoining windows.

Catdjo returned, shaking his knotty-haired head.

In a few moments Hoyle Yarik came in with a swagger and a defiant front, and one hand slyly on a pistol-butt beneath his jacket.

At the same time the shadow fell again across the blind.

"Hoyle Yarik," said Dwilla, with a stiff inclination of her shapely head.

"That's me! Je-re-my said you wanted me on business."

"Yes."

"Drive ahead, then. But mind, I'm a pretty desp'rate character just about now—blast my teeth if I ain't! And I won't stand any tricks."

"You are an escaped convict, Hoyle Yarik."

"Well—yes. But it wouldn't be safe for you to tell anybody that, young 'un," with a threatening accent.

"I judge that you must be without money. I am ready to supply you with funds, if you will give me some information which I desire. Is that plain?"

"Oh, that's plain." But he asked, independently: "What is that information?"

"If you will tell me what became of the child of the last daughter of David Dane, or what became of Nora Dufour after she left the grave of her husband, I'll give you five hundred dollars."

"She's business, blast my teeth if she ain't!" commented Yarik. "Now, by thunder! here's another—like Paul Faerot—after the last daughter of old David Dane! Dane stock's at a premium! Tell her what became of Nora Dufour after she—um! catch Hoyle Yarik at it! But, the baby, eh? Let's see—"

"Did you hear my proposition, Hoyle Yarik?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"No matter. I believe you can tell me what I wish. I offer you a good price. Will you accept?"

Before Yarik could reply, there came a startling interruption.

A dark form shot through the air, and the window panes crashed and shattered into atoms.

The Dwarf had seen the shadow on the blind. He knew there was an eavesdropper on the porch, and in a second he had him by the throat.

The attack was unexpected and fierce, and ere he could resist, Catdjo had dragged him half-way across the sill, where he held him, with iron fingers gripping at his windpipe, and choking back the cry of surprise and anger.

Yarik's nerves were on edge. He thought

it a conspiracy to entrap him; and, without waiting to consider the import of the scene, he made a dash for the door.

Dwilla barred his passage.

"Stand aside!" he shouted, more than ever fearful for his safety, when he saw her movement.

"Hold there, Hoyle Yarik!"

"Out of the road! You've not got me yet, blast your teeth!"

A pistol leaped forth in his hand, and he advanced toward her with the deadly muzzle raised.

Simultaneously there sounded a sharp report in the direction of the window, and Catdjo, his face bathed in blood, reeled blindly backward.

Paul Faerot, released from the Dwarf's vise-like grip, bounded into the room.

Yarik, frenzied by a dread of capture, did not comprehend the true cause of the confusion. As Faerot advanced, the convict's pistol blazed in his face.

The aim was a bad one; but the bullet stunned him, and he sunk to the floor.

"Let me out of this now!" Yarik roared.

"You shall not go, Hoyle Yarik, till you have sold your knowledge to me. Ha! see, thank Heaven, Catdjo is not badly hurt!"

The Dwarf was kneeling with one knee on the prostrate form of Faerot, binding the hands and feet of the insensible man with handkerchiefs.

"Look out there, young 'un!—I've got another bullet left. I'm not bagged yet. Stand aside, or—"

He paused short. A dagger flashed in his face, and Dwilla, the girl-woman, hissed:

"Halt, there, before I strike! I am as desperate as you are. I want to find the last daughter of David Dane; and if you won't tell me, then you shall never leave this room alive—never alive, Hoyle Yarik, I swear it!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTER'S TRIUMPH.

"But whence the deadly hate
That caused all this? * * *

—ROGER.

"The silent, soft and humble heart
In the violet's hidden sweetness breathes;
And the tender soul that cannot part,
A twine of evergreen fondly wreathes."
—PERCIVAL.

"I know not if the sunshine waste,
The world is dark since thou art gone!"
—WILLIS.

THE Dufours were near neighbors to the dwellers of Lyn Farm.

A broad estate, with acres richly cultivated through the seasons, and yielding bountiful harvests. Its handsome dwelling had been improved many times within a few years; and whatever Gerald Dufour lacked in other qualifications he certainly had the reputation of being a steady, business-like, successful farmer.

He was a man of peculiar likes and dislikes; morose-tempered, and exceedingly unpopular in Bud Villa. But whether this latter fact annoyed him was not apparent; he was always cold, haughty, irritable, decidedly bear-like in his domestic life, and, by his actions, causing braver gossips to say that there must be some great secret locked in Gerald Dufour's breast, which made him seem to dread a too close contact with the busy world.

Wharle, after separating from his sad little sweetheart, on that bright Sunday noon, reached home just as the farmer and his wife were sitting down to dinner.

He perceived a worried look in his mother's face; and on his father's brow there was a lowering frown, boding a tempest.

"Well, sir," said Gerald Dufour, carving spitefully at the fowl, "where have you been?"

Wharle was surprised. Such a question had not been asked him for over a year.

"Over to the Lyn farm, father."

"Ahem!—have, eh? To see that girl Ytol?"

A pause ensued, the silence broken by the cracking of the bones and joints, as the knife went savage and jerking through the meat.

Mrs. Dufour sat very still.

"Well, sir, I saw you."

"Saw me, father?"

"Yes, sir, I want you to understand that I saw you—saw it all."

"What, father?"

"Your outlandish tomfooleries with the waif of the Lyn farm."

"There's nothing foolish between Ytol and I—"

"I say there is!" interrupted Dufour, striking the table with the handle of his knife, neglecting the carving, and gazing sternly at his son.

The contention had begun. Mrs. Dufour gave her husband an appealing glance; but it was lost.

"I say, there is foolishness between you and this girl Ytol—too much of it. And I want it stopped. Do you hear?—stopped at once."

"Father—" began Mrs. Dufour.

"Silence!" And to Wharle: "She has already captivated you by her pretty face and artful coyness. If it goes any further, there'll be trouble. Remember that—trouble."

Wharle's handsome face colored; but his voice was firm as he asked:

"What has Ytol done, father, that you object to my acquaintance with her?"

"No, matter," bluntly, and he resumed his manipulation of knife and fork.

"Has Ytol ever wronged you?"

A momentary glance from the hard, dark eyes; but no return.

"Is not Ytol a good girl, father?"

"She is indeed," put in Mrs. Dufour, who felt it her duty to do the friendless child that justice.

"Doral!" he exclaimed.

"I can't help it, Gerald; everybody knows that Ytol is gentle and good, though no one will bestow a smile upon her."

"Because she's a waif, the offspring of some disreputable pair—"

"Take care!" she warned, in a strange tone, as he uttered the last.

"She's a waif, and that's enough."

"Not enough for me," defended the wife.

"The child is not to blame for—"

"Doral—you forget yourself!" sharply, and with rising anger.

There was far more of meaning in this reminder than a listener could detect. She made no further remark, but gazed steadily into his face, which was purpling with a half-curbed passion.

"They are entirely too intimate. I saw him kiss her."

"Nay, dear father and mother, don't quarrel—and about Ytol," begged Wharle.

"The first thing we know they'll be genuine lovers. Then what? Do you suppose I would permit it? Sooner see him dead! I have other views for our son."

"You should have spoken sooner, father," said Wharle.

"What do you mean by that?"

"We are lovers already."

"What!"

"It is too late now for us to be dragged asunder."

"What—what have you been saying to her?" he gasped, choking with pent rage.

"The same that you said to my mother once," answer Wharle, calmly, and his honest brown eyes never flinched.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are pledged to each other?—you—two children?"

"Don't be angry, father. I know that everybody is unkind to Ytol, because she is poor and shrouded in mystery, because she cannot name her parents. She is abused by words and acts, despised and buffeted. But she is good and pure, and her father and mother must have been like her—"

"They were not. Bad philosophy!" Dufour, senior, cried. "The fairest flowers come from the filthiest dirt, perhaps!"

"Her God is our God!" continued the boy, eloquently, "and in his eyes she is spotless, and worthy of anybody's love. If she is unfortunate it is not her fault. Not a girl in the whole village more deserving than she for her truth, her humble spirit, and her modesty. She loves me dearly. And I have vowed—yes, vowed that she shall be my wife—"

"Never!—if I have to kill you first," cried the father, half-blind, and swaying unsteadily in his consuming wrath. "How dare you!—you—sdeath!"

"Oh, Heaven!" moaned Mrs. Dufour, hiding her face in her hands.

"Father!" Wharle arose, and stood holding by the back of his chair, while his face glowed, "do not talk of killing me; you are not yourself now, and know not what you say. I am sorry that I should have gone contrary to your wishes; but, I repeat, it is too late to retract. I could not—if I would—desert Ytol, without breaking her confiding heart. Heaven knows, her existence is miserable enough as it is—and that same Heaven shall judge me when I say I will be true to Ytol though I have to rebel against you!"

The boy was warmed to a vigorous spirit, giving vent to his feelings in a way that held Gerald Dufour, for the time, listening. His eyes flashed out the enthusiasm of his soul; he raised a hand aloft and pointed upward, as if invoking the ear of Him who best knew the right and wrong of this impressive scene.

For several seconds the irate farmer seemed bereft of speech. Then:

"Curse this Ytol! Curse her winning ways! Accursed be every hour of her existence! You shall not marry her! I would rather stab you to the heart first! You shall not!—you shall not!—no!—NEVER!"

He wheeled from the table, and, grasping up his hat, strode from the house.

He walked along the graveled way at a quick, uneven pace, and, pursuing an indefinite course, presently entered one of the broad fields just greening with young wheat.

He was lost to everything but his passion, which consumed him, maddened him; and all singular and unexplained this dire, more than hatred, which he evinced toward pretty, harmless Ytol.

Then a revolution seemed to form within him. A short distance off, on the right, he could see Farmer Lyn's house; and he turned abruptly in its direction, muttering:

"She must be gotten out of the way. This must be prevented. Curse the fate which has attached to her line!—one that deprived me of a brother. My son marry her?—never!"

As he neared the dwelling, he paused on hearing a loud cry from within.

Rebecca Lyn's voice was crying out harshly, and Ytol was screaming for mercy, as the relentless spittle plied the stinging strap.

"Mother Lyn! Mother Lyn! Don't!—oh, don't beat me any more!" rung in the ears of the listener outside, and he halted behind the angle of the stable.

Perhaps Gerald Dufour might have softened toward the unhappy creature while thus witnessing her actual sufferings. But, the dark cloud settled again in his face.

"No, no; no pity here. No pity for the child of those for whom I once swore eternal hate! And sooner than see her the wife of Wharle, I'd kill both her and him!"

Then Mother Lyn:

"Now, you vixen! I said I'd thrash you when I came back, and I've kept my word. Away with you, and bring the chickens for dinner. Stir yourself, or I'll give you some more!"

Ytol came out, weeping bitterly. Her whipping had been severe; yet she felt far more the undying animosity of her tormentor than she did the merciless blows.

Not a day passed without the usual punishment, till her tender flesh was striped and blue with the marks of violence.

"Ytol," called a low voice near her.

She looked quickly up.

"Why, Mr. Dufour—are you here?"

"Come to me, Ytol; I want to speak to you."

His tone was kind and persuasive. It was assumed to further his plans—for he had conceived a plot by which to sunder the mutual attachment existing between the two children.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Dufour"—courtesying, "but, indeed, I haven't a minute to spare. I must hurry back, or Mother Lyn will beat me! Won't you set up and see them at the house?"

"I want to see you—not them. You poor child! I heard her whipping you, just now. I feel for you."

It had been long since Gerald Dufour used the kindly tone with which he now addressed Ytol.

His sympathy brought back the tears

which she had wiped away on seeing him, and her lips quivered with a suppressed sob.

"Come here, Ytol. I'll be answerable for your delay. I have something important to speak to you."

Feeling assured of his protection she obeyed.

"My child," he said, "you have done very wrong; do you know it?"

"I don't know in what you mean, Mr. Dufour; but everybody says that of me, whatever I do, so it must be so."

"Well, I'll tell you what I mean: you have won the love of my son, Wharle."

She started and paled.

"And is that a sin, Mr. Dufour? Oh! it has been my only happiness. No one loves me—everybody hates me. Wharle has not treated me like the rest—and I have blessed him for it. What is there wrong in that?"

"Wait, wait. You do not consider how serious it may turn out. Now, Ytol, I admit you are an unfortunate girl. But that cannot alter the case. Let me be plain. You and Wharle can never be married with my consent. You love him—"

"Oh! I do love him, Mr. Dufour. Don't say that we must be parted!"

"Be sensible, Ytol. If you love him, then you must make a sacrifice in his interest."

"How?" pulling nervously at the corner of her apron.

"If he persists in holding to his vows, I shall disown him," yrev calmly, but very distinct.

"Oh, Mr. Dufour!" she cried, clasping her hands, and turning those great blue eyes imploringly on his face, "you wouldn't do that?"

"Yes, I'll cast him out without a penny. Think of it: he is young and ambitious; he has the world before him, filled with brilliant prospects. If he marries you, he will be poor, and must struggle constantly; and, no doubt, he would soon regret his headstrong act. His love for you would molder away under the tax and torture of poverty, and you would both be wretched. Would you wish to blight Wharle's life like this?"

Ytol did not reply for several moments.

"I certainly wouldn't marry him if you did not consent, Mr. Dufour. I wouldn't want him to disobey you."

His eyes gleamed.

"And you never will have my consent."

"But what am I to do?" Ytol faltered.

"Will you do as I advise? Listen: why not run away from this place, where you get nothing but scolding and kicks?"

"Run away!"

"Yes. You could find comfort among strangers."

"Oh! I couldn't leave father Lyn," said the child; "he does all he can for me. I never thought of such a thing as running away."

"But it's high time you did, my dear. I make you an offer: I'll give you a thousand dollars, if you leave these parts forever."

"A thousand dollars!"

Ytol instantly thought of what might possibly be accomplished with such a sum; and notwithstanding she did not wish to give up father Lyn, she began to consider the temptation.

Still, her eyes drooped with this fresh pang that was in her heart, and the fair head sunk slowly forward.

"It is the only way in which you can break off the unlucky engagement with Wharle. You cannot marry him, and you will both feel bad every time you meet, knowing this. Nobody will mourn your absence particularly; and with a thousand dollars in your pocket, who knows but what, some day, you may be a grand lady?"

And Ytol, to herself:

"There would be an end to these cruel whippings. I might educate myself with the money. Perhaps, after all, Wharle will not miss me so much. He would soon find somebody else to love better than me. Besides, I would not marry him without his father's consent, and ruin all his prospects. All's for the best—"

"Well, Ytol, what do you say?"

"Mr. Dufour"—it cost a superhuman effort, "I think I'll do as you advise."

Gerald Dufour lost no time, now, in clinching the matter.

"To-night, at twelve o'clock," he said, almost hissing, "meet me at the mile-stone."

I'll be there to give you the money. You can take the Bud Villa stage at 3 A. M.; and after that, go where you please."

"I'll be there," promised Ytol, lowly.

"Do not fail."

Just then came the harsh voice of Rebecca Lyn:

"Ytol, you vixen! where's them chickens?"

"Coming, mother Lyn—coming," answered Dufour, advancing briskly; and to Ytol: "Make haste, my dear; I'll see you through."

At sight of the visitor, mother Lyn's exterior changed wonderfully. She greeted him with utmost cordiality.

"Why, good-day, neighbor Dufour. How do you do? Come right straight in and make yourself at home. We're *very* glad to see you. Herbert! Herbert! Herb-e-r-t! here's dear Mr. Dufour come to see us. Herbert, I say!"

Dufour lingered long enough to explain that Ytol had delayed to converse with him, at his request, and was not to blame. He also exacted a promise from mother Lyn that the strap should not be used again that afternoon.

He was elated with the success of his proposition to the young girl. When he took his departure—declining their pressing invitation to dine—his habitually stern countenance wore a satisfied, even jubilant expression, and he chuckled lowly.

CHAPTER V.

ADRIPT, AND WHITHER?

THAT night Ytol did not undress, but threw herself on the narrow couch, and lay silent in the cheerless room, with face buried in the coarse pillow.

After awhile she began to sob in a hushed, painful way, and her lips murmured, brokenly:

"Oh, Wharle!—dear Wharle! And so I must give you up, after all? God bless you for every kind word with which you tried to cheer me! God bless you always, and teach you, in his strength, for your own good, to forget poor Ytol. Oh, heaven!—the sweet heaven Wharle taught me to believe is far beyond the skies, and peopled with angels that sympathize with, and watch over the oppressed—aid me, now! Let me not plead in vain for that comfort and guidance which, he said, always came in answer to prayer."

She slid from the bed and knelt down, raising her eyes upward in the darkness, and praying fervently.

The tears gushed anew over her cheeks, for Wharle had taught her that very appeal to God—a sublime, yet simple beseeching, whispered by a weary, laden soul. Slowly the hours passed; the night deepened, and she remained there, with face hid in the coverlet to drown the sobbing; and the whole picture of the past—with its trials—was flitting through her mind; a panorama, bleak and sad, interspersed by the few recollections of endearment that centered round Wharle Dufour.

Shortly after eleven o'clock, a tip-toeing figure glided forth into the starry night.

It was Ytol.

She paused a moment to look back on her home of sadness.

Carlo, the watch-dog, came bounding to her side with a low whine of pleasure.

"Good-by, Carlo—dear old fellow! good-by. You always loved me, poor thing. I'm sorry to leave you, but I must. Poor dumb Carlo! how we have played together. You won't have anybody to romp with when I am gone. You'll soon forget me, though; Ytol won't be remembered long. Good-by!"

She bent, as she talked in this strain, to caress the faithful animal that fawned affectionately against her. Then she started down the spectral lane, to keep her engagement at the mile stone.

Carlo followed close at her side. She strove repeatedly to drive him back, but he would not leave her. He seemed to feel that she needed a protector; and finally, fearful of being late at the appointed spot, she allowed him his own way.

Ytol never dreamed then that he was to be her valued companion in the checkered career about to open on her young life.

When morning broke Ytol and Carlo were missed.

Greatest excitement prevailed on the Lyn farm. The "hands" were dispatched to

scour in every direction, and a messenger was sent to Bud Villa, to make inquiries.

Rebecca Lyn immediately concluded that the child had run off, and she waited, grinding her false teeth and fingering the strap, vowing direst punishment when the vixen should be brought before her.

But, Ytol was not to be found.

Herbert Lyn tried not to believe that she had surely fled, and forced himself to appear calm, while his heart was mourning.

The messenger returned in due time from Bud Villa, with the intelligence that Ytol had left in the three o'clock stage accompanied by a dog known as belonging to the Lyn farm.

The farmer was utterly broken down in spirit by the news. He sat like a statue before the hearth-stone, with a single burning tear trickling down his hot cheek.

"Poor Ytol! Poor little Ytol!" he murmured; "I loved her as if she was my own child. It was your fault, mother Lyn—all yours; you drove her out into the cold world. May God forgive you for it! I feel that we shall never see her again—never. Poor—friendless—Ytol!"

Rebecca Lyn said nothing. She hung up the strap on its pin, and went moodily about her household affairs. It may be, just the slightest pricking of remorse entered her hardened bosom at the moment, caused by reflections on the past treatment of the child, and thoughts of the dangers to which she would be exposed while struggling alone amid the cold charity of the earth's people.

Far off, on the banks of the shining bay, a figure was wandering about in loneliness, with sorrow-hung head.

Wharle Dufour.

The boy realized his loss all too keenly. When he knew that Ytol had gone—perhaps forever—a damp despair shadowed over his heart; the sunny hopes and ambitions which he had cherished, to share with his loved companion, all sunk in ashes; and he roamed disconsolately night the dear, familiar tryst, talking and moaning to himself, and calling Ytol's name, as if he expected to see her spring from some near covert to meet him as she had been wont.

"Oh, Ytol!—Ytol!" he groaned, in an anguished spirit, "you never loved me truly, or you would not have done this. I could bear it if it was only for awhile, but to lose you forever!—to see you no more! I cannot live without you! Come back to me, Ytol—come back!"

The ripple of the waters thrown by the soft breeze in tiny waves upon the shore; the gay, melodious warbles of birds that had no interest in his woe; the swaying of budding branches, and mysterious sighs—these alone answered him.

All around seemed very, very drear. There were no longer any charms in the bursting beauties of spring-time; everything seemed dark and mistful, since the sweetest, rarest flower of the scene was missing.

Ytol was miles away, speeding over the railroad, with Carlo napping at her feet—speeding further and further from the heart that pined for her, and wondering, silently, what her future was to be.

How many of us, like to her, have wondered thus, building golden castles or glorious ideals—to see them vanish in the gall-girt realisms of Time?

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TRAIL.

"This, this is the race for gain and grace,
Richer than vases and crowns."

—TUPPER.

"How little we may count upon the future,
Or reckon what that future may bring forth."

—NORTON.

HOYLE YARICK shrunk back before the glistening blade in Dwilla's hand.

Her determined, threatening tone was not to be mistaken; he saw that the girl would fight to the death—stab him, perhaps, if he advanced another step, and he returned the flashing gaze of her lustrous eyes, pausing before her in momentary indecision.

"Well, what in thunder does all this mean?" he demanded in a high key.

"It means that you are a fool to be frightened so easily. You are not in danger. Wait till Catdjo secures that man, and we'll proceed to business. Are you hurt, Catdjo?"

The Dwarf made a sign in the negative; but even as he did so he wiped away the blood that was trickling from a wound in his forehead, and marring his vision.

Paul Faerot still lay as if dead. The Dwarf soon had him tightly bound, hand and foot.

"Take him from the room," ordered Dwilla.

Catdjo raised the limp, heavy form in his muscular arms, and carried it into one of the opposite apartments, during which space Dwilla explained to the convict.

Yarik was soon assured, and he restored the pistol to his pocket.

"Blast my teeth!" he exclaimed, "I thought you'd laid a trap for me. Since it's all right, why—yes, we'll proceed to business. Drive ahead, young 'un."

He swaggered rollingly across the room, and seated himself upon the lounge, eying her stoically.

Catdjo returned, bathing his forehead with a rag. The bullet of Faerot's pistol had gouged an ugly furrow just above the temple, but the hurt was not serious.

"Now, Hoyle Yarik, do you accept my proposition?"

"Just state it over again, young 'un. How was it?" pulling his hat down over his eyes, and smoothing his beard with an air of importance.

"I want to know what became of Nora Dufour, after she left the grave of her husband, Silas, with her babe in her arms? or, what became of that babe after it was separated from its mother, if it was separated? Or, if Nora Dufour is alive, where is she to be found?"

"Ah—um!" vented Yarik, removing his hat and running his fingers through his matted hair, with his elbow propped on his knee. "Well, Nora Dufour's dead—I reckon"—nodding significantly.

"Then the child?"

"Where's the cash, young 'un?" extending one hand, and snapping his fingers meaningly.

Dwilla received a large pocketbook from the Dwarf. Extracting the sum she had offered, she said, inquiringly:

"You will tell me?"

"Yes."

"Mind, no trickery—"

"Just hand over them notes, young 'un, and you'll get what you want."

When he had carefully stowed away the money which Dwilla gave him, he walked to the window, relieved his mouth of its cud, swaggered back to his seat, and said:

"Now, it'll take mighty few words to tell the whole thing."

"Yes, yes."

At that moment, unperceived by the girl, the Dwarf or the convict, the same shadow that had previously caused the scene of commotion, fell across the shattered panes, and rested on the curtain.

Paul Faerot had burst his bonds, and was at his former stand playing eavesdropper.

"Go on, Hoyle Yarik—this child?"

"Well, you must know, Nora Dufour died pretty soon after her husband. You know how he died?"

"It was supposed that he was murdered."

"Well—yes," mysteriously, and glancing covertly at her.

"Never mind that, Hoyle Yarik; but, go on."

"Before Nora Dufour died, she took her baby to a farm-house, and left it on the porch. She hadn't a red penny in the world, and was sick at the time, so she thought she'd turn the helpless thing over to somebody 'at might raise it to some good—"

"Where is this place? Where did she leave the babe?" interrupted Dwilla.

"It was at the Lyn farm, about one mile outside of Bud Villa, on the up-country road."

"And how long ago was it?"

"Some fifteen years, near as I can remember."

"Has the child a name?"

"Yes, I think Herbert Lyn called it 'Ytol.' But, maybe it's changed since. I've been in jail nigh onto six years."

"Then the child of Silas and Nora Dufour is at a place near here, known as the Lyn farm? And she—it is a girl?"

"Yes."

"She is called Ytol?"

"That's it."

"Do you hear, Catdjo?"

There came a low, chuckling, guttural sound—hardly a laugh—from the Dwarf's thick lips, and he nodded rapidly several times.

"If that's all you wanted, young 'un, I guess I'll go now."

"I am done with you."

Yarik withdrew, wondering upon two things: first, how she knew that he possessed the information she desired; second, why this strange girl and Satan-of-a-Dwarf were so anxious to ascertain the whereabouts of the child of Nora Dufour.

"Maybe the gal's come into a legacy," he surmised, "and these folks are huntin' her up to tell her."

But, Hoyle Yarik conjectured widely from the truth.

Another incentive brought the mysterious couple in pursuit of Ytol, another object urged them on—one which, could Ytol have been apprised of it, would have chilled her blood and caused her to flee to the uttermost ends of the earth.

In the hallway, Yarik encountered Paul Faerot, the man he had shot down awhile before. The meeting startled him; instantly his hand sought his pistol, and he halted warily.

Faerot noticed the movement.

"Don't be alarmed," he said; "you need not fear me, Hoyle Yarik."

"Who the devil are you? blast your teeth! You've been dogging me ever since I got into jail and out of it."

"You know that I sought exactly the same information which you have just given to the parties in Room 3. I'm after Ytol, the daughter of Nora Dufour. I know where she is now, for I was listening at the window."

"You was, eh? Then you needn't bother me any more. Let me get past here."

"I want you for something else, Hoyle Yarik. Wait."

"Want me, do you?" grasping the pistol-butt, and fitting thumb and finger to the hammer and trigger.

"I tell you you need not fear me. I, also, have a proposition to make."

"You have?"

"Yes. Step into this room with me and hear it."

Yarik did as requested. But, he was only half-satisfied of his safety; for he kept a close watch on the movements of the man, with weapon ready.

As they disappeared beyond the doorway, Catdjo crossed the hall to the apartment where he had left Faerot bound and insensible. A low cry of surprise told that he had discovered the prisoner's absence; then all was still.

At the expiration of half-an hour Faerot and Yarik emerged from the room and proceeded down-stairs. The two appeared to be on excellent terms.

"Remember now, Yarik, it is a sacred bargain," said Faerot, holding him by the arm, and pausing in the narrow passage.

"Count on me till I kick the bucket. I'm yours—blast my teeth if I ain't!"

Hoyle Yarik went into the rear room, and Faerot was soon hurrying along the main street of Bud Villa.

The tavern-keeper was sitting in a contracted position, in one of the cane chairs, white as death, and shivering as if with an ague.

He had heard the pistol-shots in the upper story, and his mind was overwhelmed at once with pictures of bloody tableaux and murdered humans.

With limbs quaking beneath him, he hastened to close the doors and windows; and now he sat in the darkened surroundings, his face ghastly and teeth rattling together.

"Hello, Je-re-my!" exclaimed the convict, pausing in astonishment, "what's the row?"

"D-de-de-d-de—" Coddle had not the power to speak.

"What's up, Je-re-my? Blast my teeth! it's dark enough to bring the owls out."

"Who—who—who's killed?" stammered Coddle.

"Kill'd?"

"Who—who's shot?"

"Ha! ha! ha! why, there isn't anybody hurt; only accidental explosion, Je-re-my."

"Are you sure?" he asked, stuttering.

"Course I am. Only a kinder little surprise scene; no damage done. Come, let's have some light in here." As he spoke, he raised one foot breast high, sent it crashing through the window, and burst the shutter from its bolt.

"Now, bring me a razor, Je-re-my—and mug and brush."

"A razor?" echoed Coddle.

"A razor!" shouted Yarik.

Coddle jumped at the fierce tone.

"Now, my dear Hoyle, what can you want with a razor?"

"To cut somebody's throat—"

"Oh, Lord!"

"Hurry, Je-re-my, I want to get rid of this hair on my face, that's all."

Coddle procured the articles, casting fearful glances at the savage convict as he walked unsteadily from the room.

When he returned Yarik proceeded to shave before the broken mirror that hung upon the wall.

"Je-re-my, I want a new suit of clothes."

"You shall have them, my dear Hoyle; you shall have the very best—you shall have anything."

"My dear Hoyle," mimicked Yarik, lathering his beard; then, sharply: "Fetch 'em out in a hurry. I'm going to begin a new life to-day, Je-re-my. I haven't got much time to spare—why don't you move?"

"Yes, yes, I'll bring them."

Coddle made all possible haste to supply him. He felt encouraged by the thought that he would soon be rid of this half-fierce, law-hunted and much-feared individual—rid of him in a manner which we will show presently.

He brought his new clothes and laid them on the table.

"Now, Je-re-my, we'll fix up our old accounts. You've got some money of mine?"

"My dear Hoyle—"

"My dear Hoyle!" in whining imitation of the tavern-keeper's wavering tone; and then: "Come, Je-re-my, shell out. When I was captured and sent to jail for that little affair on the Gypsy Queen, I left a thousand dollars with you. Produce it, Je-re-my—produce it, old boy."

Coddle seemed dismayed.

"But, Hoyle, you don't really want it—"

"Yes, I do, Je-re-my; so hand it over."

"But, it isn't in the house. I haven't it here," protested the tavern-keeper, trembling till he nearly sunk down.

"You lie, Je-re-my!"

Yarik had done shaving, and was leisurely putting on his outfit. He spoke in a peculiarly quiet voice, but Coddle shuddered as the bleary eyes glanced on him.

"My dear Hoyle—"

"Don't you 'dear' me any more, blast your teeth! Give me what belongs to me. Quick, now, or I'll draw the edge of that razor around your neck!"

Coddle groaned aloud.

"I haven't it in ready money, Hoyle; it's loaned out at interest—indeed it is. All my capital is invested. If you'll only wait—"

"I won't wait!" Yarik snarled. "And I say you lie! I'll give you five minutes to produce that thousand."

He paused in his shirt-sleeves, and took up the razor from the table, fingering it menacingly.

"Hoyle! Hoyle!"—the affrighted tavern-keeper dropped to his knees and clasped his hands—"I swear it isn't in the house! Don't!—for the Lord's sake, don't!"

What Yarik might have done was suddenly prevented.

In the center of the room was a trap door, leading to the ale-vault. This trap-door shot up and over with a bang, and three men, with the nimbleness of monkeys, bounded out on the floor.

"Back to prison, Hoyle Yarik, for the murder of Nora Dufour!" cried the foremost.

"Surrender!" shouted another.

Yarik comprehended in an instant.

"Detectives!" he blurted.

Had he known that Jeremy Coddle admitted those detectives and hid them away, to aid them in making the capture, the tavern-keeper would have died that minute; for Yarik's pistol was out quick as a flash, and he bounded toward the window.

Gaining the sill at a leap, he paused, up-

right, holding by the frame, and faced his enemies with leveled weapon.

His hair stood out wildly, his whole mien was desperate, ferocious, defiant as he roared, in his bull-like voice:

"Not yet, my hearties! Come on, blast your teeth!—take Hoyle Yarik if you can!"

They paused before the frowning muzzle; three revolvers raised simultaneously to bear upon him.

"Catch him! Catch him!" screamed Coddle. "Don't let him escape!"

"So you did this, eh?" bellowed the convict, in a terrible accent. "Take that, then!"

The pistol cracked, and its ball sped on an aim of death.

Coddle uttered a shriek of agony, and reeled, tossing his arms aloft.

Blending with this rung the whip-like snaps and reports of the revolvers.

Hoyle Yarik went backward, through frame and sash, amid a shower of glass.

But when the detectives reached the window the convict had vanished.

The stage that left Bud Villa at three o'clock on the morning subsequent to the events of this chapter contained Dwilla St. Jean and the Dwarf, Catdjo.

On the outside of the coach, with the driver, were Paul Faerot and Hoyle Yarik—both disguised beyond possibility of recognition.

The first-named couple had been to Lyn Farm; but they missed their object, whatever it was; for the reader knows that Ytol had fled on Sunday night.

Now, however, they were on her track. She had considerable start ahead of them, but they felt confident of being able to trace her—the more so when they learned that she was accompanied by a large Newfoundland dog.

"We may soon overtake her, Catdjo," said Dwilla to her mute companion, "and then for your revenge! I wish the thing was over. You've been dragging me all over the country, till I'm tired."

The Dwarf's eyes were flashing, and his beast-like face was contorted twice as gely. But the gloom of the coach covered this sign of inward passion.

Reaching the station, they made inquiries, and soon ascertained that a young girl answering to their description, and having with her a large dog, had taken a Philadelphia train on the morning previous.

"Oh, Catdjo!—tickets for Philadelphia."

While these two were foot-hot in the wake of Ytol, for a purpose to be developed in due time, Faerot and Yarik were their close companions, following the same scent, though with a far different object in view.

Would they find her?

And Ytol?—where was she while the four, in couples, were so mysteriously pursuing her? And what tangled web was their presence weaving for her future?

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRIEND INDEED.

"Oh, Memory! shield me from the world's poor strife."

—BLOOMFIELD.

"* * * Time to youthful troubles brings relief,

And each new object weans the child from grief."

—SOUTHEY.

"Nor with a frozen afterthought
Dissect thy generous heart,
And count each pulse that bids thy blood
Gush with a quicker start."

—NORTON.

CLANG! Clang! Clang! rung the great hand-bell at Madame De Verne's school.

A large dwelling in Pine street, Philadelphia; an institution for boarding and day scholars.

Madame was an elderly woman, scrupulously prim, wearing a tall, ruffled cap, and called—by the mischievous girls—a sour old maid. Her school had an excellent reputation, and was patronized by the wealthiest families.

The summons to class and study was pealing forth, and the girls were trooping into their seats—some of them reading letters,

which had been distributed by the teacher in charge, as usual, in the boot room.

At her own prominent desk, facing all, sat Madame De Verne, wise and stern and stiffly rigid. She was engaged with an important letter; and she frowned, and worked her thin lips thoughtfully.

"Miss Margaret," to one of her assistants, who sat near, "we have two vacancies, I believe?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Ahem! here is a letter from a guardian wishing to enter his charge as a pupil for one year. Read it."

Miss Margaret perused the application. It was from one Sandford Lyn, expressing a hope that there was room for his niece and ward, Ytol Lyn, for a period of only one year, including board during vacation. It sought information relative to terms, and so forth; the whole written in a scraggly hand, and requesting early reply.

"You will please answer it, Miss Margaret. Inclose pamphlet, and say that we shall be pleased—"

She was interrupted by a curdling scream from among the fifty faces before her.

Miss Margaret leaped to her feet, and struck the desk a rap with her gavel.

"Silence there! What does this mean?"

"Bella Drew!" screeched a chorus, in discord.

"Silence! Isabel Drew, what were you doing?"

"Nothing."

"She did! She hit me in the eye with a spitball!" cried one of the girls, dolefully.

"Punish her severely," advised Madame, in a whisper. "That miss will have to be expelled if she does not mend her ways."

"Isabel Drew, come here."

"Yes, 'm."

A tall young beauty, with chestnut curls and roguish hazel eyes, arose at the command.

She was the living torment of the whole school. Every plot of fun or bothersome trickery seemed to originate in her brain. She was being constantly dealt with by the rigor of school-law, in vain.

"Now you'll catch it!"

"Pooh! I'm not afraid of her," said Bella, turning her head, and stepping forward.

"Isabel Drew, are you not ashamed of yourself?" reprimanded Miss Margaret.

"No, 'm."

"Well, you ought to be—What are you giggling at?" rapping with the gavel.

"Why, it's so funny! There's a fly right on the end of your nose, and you can't see it."

The bait took. Miss Margaret looked cross-eyed, to see if there was a fly on her long nose, and immediately there was a general titter.

"Take bread and water for your dinner, miss. How dare you?"

"Isabel Drew," said Madame, sharply, "I cannot tolerate your wicked disposition any longer."

"Then make Miss Peggy—"

"Miss Peggy!" squeaked that old maid, turning red.

"Yes, 'Peggy'—that's your right name. If you'll stop picking at me all the time, maybe I'll do better. You always single me out when anything goes wrong, whether I'm to blame or not. And if it goes on, I'll make pa take me away from here—now."

"Retire to your seat!" ordered Madame.

"After noon recess, I want to see you."

Isabel returned to her seat, with a wink at the girls. At the first opportunity, unperceived, she shook her fist at Peggy.

It was announced at dinner, three days later, that a new scholar was coming, and Madame delivered a lecture against tricks, with a distinct promise that if there were any played upon Miss Ytol Lyn, the act would have its penalty in summary punishment.

On the day following, Ytol made her appearance.

Madame De Verne had been informed that she would come alone, with a large dog.

Ytol was soon assigned her place, and a house was built in the garden for Carlo.

The young girl looked very sad—looked as she felt among so many strangers. She realized more keenly her utter loneliness; but no one dreamed of the gnawing secret

which her tender bosom held; none dreamed that she was beginning, here, the first struggle of her new life—alone.

Her mild, sweet disposition, however, quickly won her many pleasant friends, in the study-hall, gymnasium, or on the flowered playground. Her close attention to books installed her firmly in Madame De Verne's favor. Even Peggy, the sour assistant, praised her deportment—admitting that she was a girl to love and be loved, and therefore deserving of much partiality.

Ytol studied hard. There was no time wasted in those endless frivolities which have so often proved detrimental to the pupil's advancement, while paren's attribute it to the teacher's possible incapacity. But with the resolve to merit the affection of all around her, and fit herself for contact with the world, she went slowly and surely onward, climbing from class to class, till her progress seemed incredible.

Nor did she neglect to take proper exercise. She had read, somewhere, that "a healthy mind must have a healthy body for its dwelling-place;" and thus she kept the roses in her erst pale face, whether at her school-books, or when devouring volumes of romance, which, of course, were smuggled into the building by quantities.

It was remarked that Ytol's advent had caused a wonderful change in Isabel Drew. The two, somehow, became earnest friends—a singular circumstance, considering the variance of their dispositions; and it was a friendship dear to Ytol in after years.

Her existence grew less burdensome under the influence of Bella's lively nature; their friendship appeared to strengthen every day, until they were more like sisters.

"The most fortunate thing that could have happened for my school!" said Madame, one day, when the scholars were lunching and taking their recess.

Ytol and Bella were caressing Carlo and sharing their lunch with him. Madame De Verne and Miss Margaret were looking out through the window.

"Ytol Lyn is an excellent girl," indorsed the assistant; and it was a rare thing for her to speak of a pupil with special favor.

"She has been talking to me about becoming a governess," Madame continued.

"A governess? Why, I was under the impression that her uncle and guardian was a man of considerable means."

"And I. Though I don't see that anything particular has transpired to make us think so. Deceptive impressions are very frequently stamped in our minds, you know—imaginative perception, false conclusions, et cetera."

"She has a marvelous memory," praised Miss Margaret. "Her manners are womanly. I have tested her powers severely, and she never fails."

Time rolled swiftly round. The term was drawing to a close; the girls were talking joyously of their prospective return to home and loved ones.

Ytol listened to their merriment. But she could not partake of the brimming spirit surrounding her.

Her heart was aching. They all had bright, cheerful homes, and fond arms eager to welcome them. She had none! No doting parents waited to greet her back from mental toil, no glad promises of festivity and pleasure were held out to her; there were no sweets kept in store for her—nothing but the picture of the bleak world, that waited to receive her shrinking form when she bid adieu to Madame De Verne's at the expiration of her year.

The day for departure drew nigher.

"Why so sad, Ytol? Come, cheer up—don't you know we're all going home soon? What a jolly time! Brother Harry wrote me a long letter last Thursday; he says they're going to have lots of fun when I get back. Oh, Ytol! I can hardly wait! But, what's the matter with you?"

Ytol and her friend were seated alone in the reading-room. It was Sabbath afternoon; the sun was just going down, and soft twilight weaving its mysterious gloaming round them.

Ytol had been watching the shadows that were fast forming, and thinking of herself.

Bella was poring over a volume of poetry.

As the merry girl spoke, Ytol's heart seemed to rise in her throat; she was overcome by a sudden emotion, and, bowing forward, the tears burst from her eyes.

"Why, Ytol," continued Bella, very seriously, and winding an arm round her companion's neck, "what are you crying about?"

"Oh, Bella!" she sobbed, "you are so very, very happy."

"Of course I am! I always was. I never let anything upset my equilibrium. But what has that to do with your crying?"

"Oh, I am so unhappy."

"You? For why?" sympathetically.

"You are going from here to a good, kind home, Bella. You ought to be so grateful to Heaven for this blessing."

"Well, maybe I am grateful,"—looking down thoughtfully, and appearing to argue the point in her mind.—"But you talk as if I was the only one. Are not you going home, too?"

"Home!" The word came like a wail from her lips; and then, in a strain of painful wretchedness: "Bella, Bella, I have no home!"

"No—home!"

"Dear Bella, lend me your sympathy. I'll tell you a secret. I must unburden to you. But promise me that you never will breathe it to any one."

"I promise," in awe.

"My father and mother died before I knew them," came hushed and broken from the young girl's lips. "My life has always been sorrowful—with rude treatment and scoldings, and I never had but one human friend in the world, till I met you. A short time ago I was forced to run away. I had a thousand dollars—my all, besides poor Carlo, who has been faithful to me ever since I can remember. I wrote the letter to Madame De Verne, asking if I could come here. I have studied hard, in hopes that I might accomplish enough in a year to be able to teach as governess, or something like that. I don't know where I shall go when I leave Madame De Verne's; and I am to stay here during the summer months, because I have no home, like you have. Can you not see what good reason I have for being so miserable? Oh, I shall miss you so much! Won't you write to me, Bella, and let me know that you sometimes think of me?"

A sober expression was on Bella's rosy face. She was still; and her dark eyes searched far down into the depths of the blue orbs that were turned tearfully upward.

"Why, Ytol, I never would have thought this."

"It's true, Bella—all too true. I'm nothing but a waif, now, to be tossed about here and there; and though I strive hard to bear up, I often feel that it would be a relief to die—"

"Sh! sh! sh! if Peggy heard you say that, she'd think you had a devil at your elbow."

"I know it's wicked, but—"

"There!" exclaimed the other, cheerily, "we'll soon fix this all right; you shall go home with me."

"With you!"

"Certainly—why not? I know pa and ma will be glad to see you, and brother Harry also. We'll have a grand time; I'll get you a beau—glorious!"

"Oh, Bella!"

"Yes, indeed! And who shall dare to say no when I say yes? We'll be sisters more than ever—don't you see? So you'll have a splendid vacation, after all. Don't cry any more, now, or you'll give me the 'blues.' Don't say a word; but go and pack your trunk right off, and sing ki-yi-iddle-de!"

Ytol knew her disposition too well to think that the plan was simply for sympathy's sake. Bella was deeply in earnest; and it was soon settled that Ytol should be her guest, at her lovely home in Germantown.

In addition, there were hints of a trip to the seaside, and countless schemes for enjoyment, which Bella unfolded to her during the slow hours.

And Ytol was made to feel that Heaven was pouring some little balm upon the wounds of her moments of woe, in sending her a generous, honest hearted friend who loved her like a sister.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

"Come hither, come hither—by night and by day

We linger in pleasures that never are gone;
Like waves of the summer, as one dies away,
Another as sweet and as shining comes on!"
—MOORE.

"No telling how love thrives! to what it comes!

Whence grows! 'Tis e'en of as mysterious root
As the pine, that makes its lodging of the rock,
Where you would think a blade of grass
would die!"
—KNOWLES.

So, when July, the onyx month, came round, hot and sultry, Ytol found herself at Rose Grove, Germantown, the magnificent residence of the Drews.

Isabel's brother had met them at the station, with the carriage; and Charcoal, an old negro who had done long service in the family, and who had:

"Dance' de young Miss Bel' on he knee,
sence de longest time afore she 'gin' to grow!"

He was there, with a wagon, to transport the trunks—of which Isabel had four.

Harry had been informed, especially, that they were to have a guest during the summer; a blonde beauty, two years younger than Bella, and who was—to use the gay girl's words—"just as sweet as caramels."

Harry imagined that he was exceedingly fond of caramels. Therefore he was in rapturous expectation.

He had just reached maturity, was full of life and fun, like his sister, and it seemed to Ytol as if she had known them all her life, so cordial was the welcome extended to her.

Mr. Drew had a stern face, but it did not portray his heart, for he was gentle as a woman, and saluted Ytol, on their first meeting, with a kiss that brought the blushes to her cheeks, and made Harry very envious as he stood in the background.

And Rose Grove was such a lovely place! A stone mansion with Gothic roofing, and long, pendent moldings; a broad, pillared porch, on the top of which was a vine-clad piazza dressed in rare exotics; a surrounding of monstrous oaks that afforded a delicious shade, and were constantly musical with the wild songs of birds; serpentine paths and gaudy flower-beds—tall shrubs and romantic arbors draped and laden with honeysuckles. Ivies and wisteria clung high and thick on the walls of the house; perfect billows of bloom and fragrance feasted the eyes and continually delighted the senses.

Ytol never was so happy. There were picnic parties, pleasant drives in the cool mornings, roamings through the grove by moonlight, visits to the green-house—all weaving, involuntarily, in her mind, poetic fancies and admiration none the less passionate because she enjoyed it in her quiet way.

And above all that thrilled her was the precious draught of love here held out to her!

Harry introduced a dear friend one evening as they sat upon the porch. The four started for a stroll down the grass-bordered carriage-way.

Bella and Harry were in the lead. Jerome Foster and Ytol walked slowly behind them, gradually falling further and further away.

"Have you known Miss Drew long?" he asked, as her name arose in their conversation.

"Oh, no; I saw her for the first time at Madame De Verne's. We became very warm friends there."

"She's a splendid girl."

"You think so?" smiling.

"I do; don't you?"

"I love Bella very dearly—"

"And how I envy her the boon."

Ytol glanced up at him as if she hardly comprehended.

"Have you had a pleasant visit so far at Rose Grove?"

"Delightful! One could not help it where there is so much of inspiration—"

"Which has, of course, drawn your mind into the channel of poetry?" Jerome ventured.

"We must yield to impulse sometimes."

"Are you fond of reading?"

"Very. I only regret that I haven't had more time to devote to it—fiction I mean."

"Then you do not deride the lessons taught in works of romance?—think, as some do, they are volumes of trash and variously hurtful?"

"Far from it," answered Ytol promptly, as she recalled the worlds of beautiful thought opened to her by the passionate songs of poesy. "A good author will never shock his readers by unholy pictures! and the moral of his work will leave a more lasting impression than all the lectures of childhood combined."

"Well, I suppose I ought to woo the muses, myself. I have certainly had the incentive. Did you ever travel?"

"My sphere has been woefully limited," laughed Ytol—a laugh to combat the pang which wrung her at thought of her former lot.

"It was my good fortune," continued Jerome, "to go over, as it were, the real and fanciful ground of HAROLD, and think that Byron was not such an unsociable fellow after all."

"What heterogeneous honors deck the peer,
Lord, rhymester, petit maitre, pamphleteer!"

I have been to the East, and half-witnessed the dewy Paradises of Moore; partaken of the gayeties of the French; tried to count the beggars of London; gaped at the palaces of Venice, and 'gathered shells in days of yore'—on the shores of the Adriatic—with a variety of other exploits too numerous for the proper curb of my conceit to be mentioned! All of which have failed to raise me to the eminence of a poet. I must be a born blockhead, I guess, for I couldn't scribble a valentine if my neck was to be forfeited."

Ytol was silent. How she would like to travel, and view the fairy scenes of which she had so frequently read.

Would she ever attain the reality of her oft-painted ideals?

Time fled unmarked, as she listened to her companion; for she asked him many questions, and he gladly entertained her with an account of his European tour.

It was quite late when they returned to the house. Harry and Bella had been waiting nearly an hour for them.

Jerome Foster did not tarry. But, besides the injunction from the girls, to call soon again, Harry sung out, as his friend moved away:

"Don't forget, Jerry—drives to the Wissahickon to-morrow."

"All right."

When they retired that night, Bella exclaimed:

"Where in the world did you go to, Ytol?—we lost sight of you completely!"

"Indeed, I hardly recollect which path we took," said Ytol. "Mr. Foster was telling me all about his travels, and I was so absorbed that I forgot everything else."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!"—Bella seemed amused.

"Do you like him?"

"Very, very much."

"So do I. We used to be playmates together. When pa sent me to Madame De Verne's, Jerome went off to Europe. Do you know, it was once fixed that I should marry him when I graduated? Ha! ha! ha! But, bless you! he didn't want me, nor I him. So it fizzled! Rumor had it, when I was home last Christmas, that he was engaged to Miss Duroy. I guess it was false, though, so you 'go in.'"

"Go in?"

"He's good in every sense of the word. Set your cap for him, Ytol—He's awful rich, among other accomplishments."

"Set my cap for him?" repeated Ytol.

"Yes. Catch him for a husband."

"Oh, Bella!"

"Yes, indeed. If I were you I'd do it! Harry tells me that Jerome is perfectly infatuated with you. He and Harry are very intimate, you know."

Ytol made no reply to this. What her thoughts were, just then, it is difficult to imagine.

For two weeks there was no intermission in the routine of pleasure at Rose Grove.

Jerome was a daily visitor—always seconding Harry's schemes, and aiding wonderfully in perpetuating the general soul of merriment.

Invariably, his more marked attentions

were paid to Ytol. He was ever at her side; and Bella and Harry exchanged meaning glances as they noted his significant ardor.

But, Ytol did not dream of anything serious. She was grateful for his kindness; his acts and speeches were like so many gems sown in the hitherto lonely void of her life.

Then came the announcement from Mr. Drew, that they were going to the "Shore." Bella hailed it with a cry of delight, and Harry gave a cheer.

The house was astir with bustle and excitement; trunks were thrown open and dragged about; and Bella danced in this direction and that, sorting clothes and singing at the top of her voice.

"I am sorry to lose you," Jerome said to Ytol, as they rode swiftly over the smooth road, on the eve of the day set for departure.

"To lose me, Mr. Foster?"

"Oh, well, to lose you all," he added, making the remark a little wider.

"Why, are you not going with us?—Bella said you were."

"She did?"

"Yes."

"First I knew of it, then."

"But, of course you must go, Mr. Foster."

"Eh?" He looked at her keenly.

Ytol blushed under his steadfast gaze.

She had not thought of parting with Jerome. Isabel said he was to accompany them; and while his words surprised her, she half-admitted to herself that his presence was a necessity.

"Well, I might go if I thought—"

"If you thought what, Mr. Foster?"

"That I was really wanted."

"What?—Jerome Foster fishing for a—"

"No, no, no," he interrupted, hastily; "not that, Miss Lyn—I assure you; no."

"Then what can the matter be? I'm sure you must know that Harry wouldn't go a step without you; and Bella will not accept any excuse. So you must go."

Another keen glance from Jerome's sparkling eyes. She had not mentioned herself.

"I would go if I had an invitation."

"Depend upon it, I'll see that they bother you to death until you consent."

"I don't want them to ask me," he said, a little snappishly.

"You don't?"

"No."

"Then who will—"

"You."

"If" Ytol opened wide her blue eyes.

"If you ask me to, I'll go."

"I sha'n't do it!" she declared, averting her face, and gazing far out over a broad field of grain that waved in ripeness for the cradler, on her side of the carriage.

She was blushing deeply. His manner and tone could not be mistaken, now. Even her perception—unused, as yet, to the sharp lens of experience which aids the penetration of a worldly woman—discovered his drift; and her heart fluttered strangely.

But surely it was not that she had yielded to a responsive feeling? Could she have forgotten, so soon, the great love that had been Wharfe Dufour's, her boy-lover of the past?—now that she had reached a happier sphere, where new hearts greeted her, new voices cheered, and the handsome Jerome Foster was wont to whisper softly in her not-unwilling ear.

"Miss Lyn—Ytol—do you wish me to go?"

"I have not said to the contrary," patting one foot nervously on the carpeted floor of the carriage.

"That is an evasion."

"Is it?" coquettishly.

"I will not go unless you positively request it."

A pause. They were riding very slowly; the reins hung neglectedly.

Suddenly Ytol looked full into his face. Her cheeks were glowing to the temples, and her deep-blue eyes were half-bright, half-liquid, in a nameless glance.

"Mr. Foster, I request that you accompany us—are you satisfied?"

"I will go."

He uttered the three words in a peculiar, quiet way; a scarce-perceptible smile wreathed the corners of his mouth.

They sped on in silence after that; hardly another sentence passed between them; and when he bade her adieu, at the mansion

porch, she thought his bow and hushed farewell were singularly cold.

Jerome Foster gave himself up to a sensation of pleasure when he turned his horse out at the gate of Rose Grove. He desired to know whether his presence was really of any importance to young Ytol, and his plan to ascertain had been successful.

It was the first decided step in the direction of his wooing.

"Jerome, old boy!" he exclaimed, exuberantly, "there's the girl for you. I'll win her before the summer is over, unless I mistake her heart wonderfully!"

Would he?

CHAPTER IX.

THE AVOWAL.

"Nay! why, young heart, thus timidly shrinking?

Why doth thy upward wing thus tire?

Why are thy pinions so droopingly sinking,

When they should only waft thee higher?"

—HOFFMAN.

"On that lone shore loud moans the sea,

But none, alas! shall mourn for me!"

—WILDE.

"* * * and shapeless sights came wandering by."

—SHELLEY.

It was a festive scene in which Ytol now figured.

The Drews had spacious rooms at Congress Hall, Cape May; and Isabel who had been to the seaside every summer since she could remember—rapidly initiated her young friend in all the mysteries and gayeties of the fashionable world that centered, at the popular resort.

Though the brilliant whirlpool was new and wondrous, still it seemed to her as if there was something strangely familiar in the vast green ocean, the high rolling waves, and the far-off line of sky. It was as if she looked once more on a picture that she had seen long, long years ago; but memory failed to tell her when or under what circumstances.

"Did I ever come across there?" she oftentimes murmured, when alone, and filled with straining thought that ached her brain. "Surely I must, have been on the sea, some time—I must have crossed it; I wonder if I did?"

Her perplexities were soon obliterated in the busy mingling kept up from morning until midnight. There were no votaries of melancholy, like herself.

Ytol was a belle, though she did not appreciate it.

Tall, and remarkably developed for her years—as we have previously stated; graceful, refined, lovely. Her homage-payers were "legion;" her retiring modesty, by its very rarity, captivated those who had hitherto defied the charms of "society stars."

Isabel was proud—not jealous—of her friend's achievements, and contributed to the praises which were showered upon Ytol wherever she went.

"Admirable! Hurrah!" she sung, merrily.

"Go it, Ytol!—you'll leave a hundred sick hearts behind you when we go home."

But among them all she saw none to rival Jerome. He appeared a king compared to the host of flatterers surrounding her; one who would not imitate the silly manners of a bandbox Adonis, nor chatter, monkey-like, on senseless subjects.

With him away, Ytol would have imagined Cape May a dull, aimless place; would have considered it, in her intuitive philosophy, a vortex of nonentities, where dissipation ruled, and life lost its grander object under the strain of pursuits misnamed and frivolous.

A good distance up the diamonded sands, she and Jerome had discovered a pleasant retreat—a sort of dry inlet, where the high banks of sand shielded them from the declining sun, and they could sit, hour after hour, mutually enjoying the cool sea breeze, or quoting from favorite poets. Ytol loved such quietude, and he partook generally of her spirit—ever nigh and striving to please her.

One afternoon they sought the secluded place, to pass the time reading.

Ytol sat on a large, flat stone, which he had found and brought there for her, and he reclined at her side, on a piece of carpet provided for the purpose.

Carlo, the huge Newfoundland dog, was stretched lazily at her feet. He was one of the family and had come along; was much petted, and appeared to enjoy the new life of his young mistress with great gusto.

Jerome had been in a serious mood all that day, but she did not question.

The book he had been reading now lay idly beside him; he was smoothing Carlo's shaggy head, and glancing yearningly into the angelic face of his meditative companion.

The soft wind fanned her tresses about her brow and throat, painting a contrast between the delicate color of her cheeks and the rare purity of her throat—her attitude a picture almost heavenly, as she sat absorbed in the spell of reverie, watching

"The clear wave lifted with a gentle flow,
Rippling and bright, advancing and retreat-

ing,
Curling around the rocks its dancing spray,
Like a fair child, whose kiss of gentle greet-

ing
Woos a companion to make holiday."

"Ytol, are you contented?"

She started.

"Yes," she replied, in a hushed way.

"And happy?"

"Happy? Why should I not be? Every one here seems happy—I feel so, too."

"Not every one, Ytol."

"No? Why, who is not?"

"I am unhappy."

"You?"

"I cannot enjoy the endless routine of nonsense at this place, where flirtation is the 'order,' and truer affection is abused. I cannot throw my heart into this stream of giddy trifles—the effect is grating to my soul."

"The soul is but a harp," said Ytol, dreamily; "a strange, mysterious instrument, whose chords are varied by the touch of Time."

"And were it not for your presence," added Jerome, with an earnestness that brightened the color of her cheeks, "my harp would quiver with nothing but doleful echoes. I don't know what I would do without you, Ytol."

"A dangerous feeling, Jerome—dangerous, perhaps, for the happiness of both. We are to part soon."

"I hope not."

"It is unavoidable. I have a great deal to accomplish before I grow older. I do not yet know enough of the world in which I live. Only four weeks more, and I shall return to Madame De Verne's."

"But I would like to have you with me always, Ytol."

"Which is impossible."

"Impossible?—don't say that. You must see what I mean?—have you been blind purposely?—or have I actually failed to make you understand me? I love you, Ytol!"

"And I love you, too, Jerome—as a dear brother," very lowly.

"But why not more than that? Come, Ytol, say you will be my wife."

"Jerome!"

"Be my wife, Ytol," he repeated.

"Pshaw! why, Jerome, I am nothing but a girl."

"Then I'll wait as long as you wish. Only say that you will be mine. It will make me happy, Ytol, if I hold your promise. I feel that we were intended for each other. You are unlike the rest of your sex; you have a heart that a man may turn to with confidence. Speak the word now, and say that we may be more than brother and sister—won't you?"

"How foolish." She spoke uneasily; her blue eyes would not meet his ardent gaze.

"Not foolish, Ytol, for you know not how—"

"You have not known me long enough, Mr. Foster," she interrupted.

Her tone was cold and low; she sat like a statue, with eyes riveted on the turning-point of the bank, beyond which moved a fluttering, dancing sail.

"I have known you long enough to know that you are good and pure, and that I worship you."

The declaration aroused sad recollections in Ytol's mind! Good and pure!—yes, if silence under trial, and faith in Heaven, could make her so.

She thought of her early life, and the rude sneers of those who had shunned her because of the stigma rumor attached to her origin. She recalled the dark, malicious insinuations that had come from Rebecca Lyn's lips in her moments of anger. And then—oh, tender heart!—she questioned if she was worthy of Jerome's love—she, the outcast, waif, child of the world, whom no one knew except in herself.

"That is not sufficient, Mr. Foster."

"You call me 'Mr.'?"

"Because it is proper, now. I did not think it would come to this. Perhaps I am to blame for having unintentionally led you to it."

"In a measure, yes. You always showed me preference; I believed that you loved me, and that I might win you."

"The affection you seek was buried long ago," Ytol informed him, sadly.

"Then I would try to revive it. It might come back—just a little."

"No. Never—never!" Almost a whisper, and a vision of Wharle Dufour rose vividly in a memory of the past.

"Never, Ytol!" His voice was sorrowful.

"Then I have no object in life now."

"I am sorry. But consider: our acquaintance has been very brief; you know nothing of my origin—where I came from, who, or what I am. You only met me as Bella's friend, and would marry me because you think I suit your tastes—"

"What do I care for origin, or the past!" he pleaded. "I never gave thought to such a thing—nor do I now, though you talk in mysteries. I want you, Ytol—you! I want you to be my wife."

What Ytol might have said was checked on her lips by an apparition, which drove the blood from her face. She became suddenly rigid, staring toward the end of the bank.

It was a visage, Satanic and leering; bearded; with flaming eyes; and grinning diabolically.

"Ytol! what ails you?" he cried, wrought upon by the terror her features depicted.

She was white as death.

"Jerome! Jerome! look there!"

He followed the direction of her finger, and he too started as he beheld the unearthly thing.

For a second both seemed paralyzed; then he sprang to his feet.

Simultaneously the frightful object vanished.

It was Catdjo, the Dwarf! And Dwilla St. Jean must be somewhere near.

They had found Ytol!

CHAPTER X.

SPIRITED AWAY.

"Oh, Love! where is the heart that knows not thee?" —MOXON.

"Farewell—and blessings on thy way
Where'er thou go'st * * *

—MOORE.

"Hush—oh, Heaven! a moment more,
A breath, a step, and all is o'er!"

—TUPPER.

JEROME bounded forward toward the point where the frightful face had peered round at them and startled them with its goblin look.

But when he reached the spot, there was nothing there.

He saw a dwarfish figure fleeing along the beach—saw it dimly, for the sun had gone down, and twilight had deepened nearly into night.

"Oh, Jerome!"

Ytol had gained his side, and clung tremblingly to his arm.

"Don't be frightened, Ytol."

"It was so horrible!" said the girl, shuddering.

"But harmless, I guess. See—there he goes; you can hardly discern him, it is so dark."

She would not look.

"Come," he added, "it's getting late. We'd better return to the hotel."

Gathering up the rug and the books, they left the retreat and took their way slowly over the sands.

Ytol was silent. The deathly pallor was still in her features; and Jerome noticed that her whole frame quivered.

"Now, don't be alarmed," he said; "it was nothing, after all. Some uncouth fisherman, no doubt, not yet washed, after a day's toil, who spied us by chance."

"No goblin he; no imp of sin;
No crimes had ever known!"

"But," faltered Ytol, "I have seen that terrible face before!"

"Very possible. We often see the same object a dozen times in the course of a life; that's not uncommon. Don't worry over it."

He spoke playfully, and laughed at the affair, trying to banish the fears, which, he perceived, preyed upon her.

His efforts were vain. A strange, clammy sensation crept into her heart, a chilly foreboding was upon her, perceptible, though she tried to hide her condition.

"Think no more of it, Ytol"—seriously.

"You are too timid."

"Jerome, there's something dreadful about to happen, I know—"

"Pshaw!"

"I feel it, Jerome; I can't shake it off. The face of that man—if it was a man—is not new to me. I have seen it before—and it was in some wild tableau of confusion, a scene in which, I am almost sure, I also saw this ocean. It must have been many, many years ago, so far back that my head aches when I strive to remember. Oh! if I could only recall—"

"There! there!" laughed Jerome; "it's a clear case of momentary delusion. You'll put me in a shiver, presently, with this talk of

'Graves and worms and epitaphs.'

Quit, in mercy! I feel already as if I had slimy eels crawling down my back."

They were approaching the hotel porch, where an unusual throng moved busily to and fro.

"By Jove!—excuse the exclamation—we've lost our supper, Ytol. A hop to-night. You must hurry to your room, and 'fix up'—so must I. Remember, you are mine for the whole evening, by promise of two days ago."

Ytol retired to prepare for the hop. She was in a poor humor for the occasion; her heart was heavy, and her head ached. But, she had promised Jerome her society, and must not disappoint him.

Bella was dancing about the room, *en dishabille*, in a high state of excitement.

"At last!" she exclaimed, breathlessly, when Ytol entered. "I think I'll put you and Jerome in a bag, and tie a string round it! I've got so much to do, I don't know where to begin—and you've been a-courting with your lover, while I'm on pins waiting for you. Ytol, you're a goner! Save me a piece of wedding-cake, and I'll be godmother to the first heir! But, hurry up!—we haven't a minute. You fix my hair, Ytol, and I'll fix yours. I'll wear a red rose in my bosom, to-night, for a signal. Ha! ha! ha! Jolly! A love-sick cavalier with a Napoleonic moustache—smitten to death. I suppose you'll monopolize Jerome, of course. Poor Jerome: he's got it bad! When's the marriage? Quick, Ytol—I'm perfectly crazy for a dance!"

The music was sounding in the long hall, and the fashionables were assembled *en masse*—numbers from the other hotels and vicinity; all aglitter, aglow, astir, in a brilliant gathering to the revelries of Terpsichore.

But our interest does not lie in the ball-room.

About half-past eleven, when the bursts of pleasure and raptures of flirtation were at their height, Jerome drew Ytol away from the whirling scene, and led her out to the broad lawn.

They were alone in the stillness of the night, where none could see nor hear, and the melodies of music reached faintly to their ears.

"Ytol," he said, with a calmness that was strangely impressive, "I want to speak to you once more upon the subject of our conversation this afternoon, on the beach."

He paused. The hand that rested on his arm began to tremble; but her lips were closed.

"I want you to marry me, Ytol. I'll take you away from here; we'll travel through the Old World, and see all those sights you have so often told me you yearned

for. My life, so far, has been aimless. You are the first woman I ever loved, since my dear mother died. I want you to see how great that love is. I'll try to make your life one never-ending hour of contentment and joy. Tell me, now: won't you be my wife?"

"Jerome, I cannot!"

Her head was drooping; the answer came hushedly, yet it was prompt.

"Do you love me?"

"Heaven knows I love you, Jerome!"

"Then what is the secret that keeps you from me?"

There was no reply. Ytol was suffering, then, more than he could dream of.

"Are you made of stone, Ytol?" he asked, bitterly.

"Oh, Jerome, I dare not marry you—I could not. I tell you I love you; but it is not such a love as you seek and deserve; it is not the love a wife should bear her husband. You have been as a kind brother to me—and I have so few friends that I have blessed you in my prayers, night and day. But I have no feeling beyond that. It were a sin for you and I to wed, when you would be sure to be disappointed in me. Won't you continue to be my brother? Oh, if you only knew!—if you only knew!"

The last like a wail, the moaning of an anguished spirit that then controlled her.

"If I only knew what, Ytol?"

She was weeping, and made no answer to his question.

"This is a rejection, then?"

"We cannot marry, Jerome; my conscience forbids it."

"Be it so! I bid you farewell to-night, Ytol."

"Oh, don't go away," she said, clinging tighter to him.

"It would be torturing to me to remain—"

"Don't leave me!"

"On this very spot. . . . I hope you may be happy, Ytol. I wish I knew the secret—for it must be more than what you have told me—that places this cruel barrier between us. But I'll not question you. I accept my fate. Once I thought there might be something in the world to give me true joy—that something yourself. You have denied me the boon. I shall try to survive this by roaming out my loneliness in other lands. If we should ever meet again, and no other has won you for a bride, Time may, perhaps, have altered your heart, and I may taste the sweets that have here been held out to me in hope, then dashed to atoms. I shall never forget you, never cease to love you; but now—farewell, Ytol, farewell!"

He displaced her hand and stepped quickly back.

"Jerome! Jerome! Come back!—don't leave me forever!"

He was gone. He had pressed her hand in an icy grasp, then glided from her side, struggling manfully to crush the emotion that was rising in his breast.

For a second she stood riveted, her eyes straining after him. Then her hands clasped and wrung together convulsively, and she sunk sobbing to the sandy sward.

Hark! another footstep blending in Jerome's, but this swift, stealthy, catlike, as it rustled the weedy, close-cut grass.

A dwarfed form rose out of the shadowy surroundings, and stole forward toward her—followed by a second, a female, moving as swift, noiseless, significant.

Danger hovered thick near Ytol, though she knew it not.

"Oh, Jerome! you think I have no heart, no passion, no feeling. Heaven help me! I am miserable enough without your disfavor; ay, miserable enough to bless the veriest beggar for a friendly deed or word. How could you leave me so?—you, the only man who has gladdened my moments with a brother's love. And have I done right? Why should I still be true to Wharle? I may never see him again; and if I did, we could be nothing to each other. I might make Jerome happy, even if I—"

She stopped short as her ear caught the stealthily-approaching footsteps.

Her immediate impression was that Jerome was returning. A wild impulse seized her. She would take back the words that had made Lim so sorrowful; she would—

"Jerome! Oh, Jerome!"

But it was not Jerome. She saw two spectral figures darting upon her—a thrill of fear came over her, and his name froze on her parted lips.

Ere she could shriek she was encircled by a pair of strong arms, and a handkerchief, saturated with chloroform, was pressed down over her mouth and nostrils.

"Ha! ha! we have her at last! Tight, Catdjo!—hold her tight!"

Ytol struggled desperately; but it was not for long.

When she lay limp and still, she was grasped up in the muscular arms, and borne rapidly away toward the beach.

Her captors were Dwilla, St. Jean and the Dwarf.

On the sands a life-boat was in waiting, and three men stood ready to launch it.

Ytol was deposited in the stern-sheets; and, watching their opportunity, the boat was run out between the break of the waves. Catdjo and the men tumbled to their oars, pulling sturdily in the direction of a bright light that rode on the billows ahead.

As the abductors made off, a shaggy object shot through the air in pursuit, uttering a loud, angry yelp. It was Carlo.

The dog fell short of the boat, and was thrown back upon the sands on the crest of the flood-tide breakers. He essayed again to follow; but he could not, and each moment his mistress was receding further and further with her captors, till she was utterly lost in the gloom.

Then, amid the roar and surge of the ocean, rose the dog's long, doleful howl of distress.

Ytol was missed and promptly sought after. All search proved unavailing, of course. When they had hunted everywhere around the hotel, and day-dawn was near at hand, Harry Drew ran down to the beach to see if there were any traces of her having been there. Perhaps, had he seen the furrow from the boat-keel and the numerous footprints, his suspicions would have been aroused; but there had been a severe storm toward morning, and an unusually low tide, and the tracks were obliterated.

He met Carlo, whose deep wail had drawn him thither from the plank walk.

"Carlo! Carlo! where's Ytol? Find her, Carlo!"

The dog yelped and barked, and turned his muzzle toward the sea, and there were tears of grieving in his great black eyes. He seemed inconsolable; and Harry thought he read in his actions the story of Ytol's fate.

"Ytol must have been drowned!" he groaned, shuddering. "How could it have happened? How am I to tell the news?"—and, as if unwilling to yield to the belief that she had perished: "Ytol! Ytol! where are you?"

But the breaking day showed him a spotless sea, and all around was deserted. An ominous conviction that she was lost wrung his honest breast, and he turned sadly away from the lashing surf.

Carlo followed, anon pausing and looking back, uttering low whines.

Next day Jerome, too, was missing. He had disappeared as strangely as Ytol.

The whole was a mystery, for which Madame Gossip readily manufactured tales and hints in conjecture.

CHAPTER XI.

THE THREAT OF DOOM.

"That sudden gushing of our vain despair,
When none but God can hear or heed our call."
—NORTON.

"The night came down in terror. Through the air

Mountains of clouds, with lurid summits,
rolled;

The lightning kindling with its vivid glare
Their outlines, as they rose, heaped fold on fold,

The wind, in fitful gusts, swept o'er the sea."
—SARGENT.

DURING the evening dark clouds had gathered in the western sky, drawing slowly higher and higher in the heavens till the stars disappeared, and an impenetrable gloom lowered overhead.

There were occasional lightning flashes far off on the horizon, and faint boomings of thunder warned of an approaching tempest.

Heedless of this, a yacht was skimming over the rolling billows, her canvas spread like the wings of a huge night-bird, plowing the rising waves.

The red light in her bows had been extinguished, and the lantern at the helm only glimmered faintly in the inky blackness.

In the cabin, on one of the curtained bunks, lay Ytol—pale as a corpse, and seemingly dead. But there was life in the motionless form, to return with all its pangs and weary weights, and to the realization of new terrors.

A female, masked, and wearing a hooded cloak, stood beside the bunk, holding aside the faded draperies, and bending forward to watch the quivering lid and lash of the captive.

Behind the masked figure stood Catdjo.

The Dwarf's eyes were fixed on the couch with their old vacant stare; his arms were folded across his breast. He was like an ugly image of wood, save that he swayed with the lurching of the craft.

Pretty soon Ytol began to revive. There were symptoms of hysteria, convulsive tremblings, and she half-moaned, half-laughed, as the drug gradually relaxed its influence upon her. Then the blue eyes opened wide.

"Wake up, Ytol Dufour!—wake up!" called the figure, leaning closer.

Bewilderment still held the girl; for some minutes she did not move a muscle.

"Who are you?" she asked, starting to her elbow, and gazing hard at the mask.

"One who has searched for Ytol Dufour these many years, and who sought your mother before you."

Ytol Dufour?—Dufour?

"That is Wharle's name—not mine," she thought, perplexed at the other's reply. "What can this mean? Oh! how my head pains me!" She pressed one hand across her eyes, for her vision was swimming, and her brain was aching sorely.

"Can you guess where you are?"

"No—where?"

"In mid-ocean."

"On the ocean!" incredulously.

"Far from friends, and in my power, Ytol Dufour. Do you hear?—you are being borne further and further from those who love you, deeper and deeper into the net of those who hate—who hate you, I say."

Ytol was dumb with a nameless feeling. The disguised voice continued:

"You are completely in my power; no one near to hear you, if you cry for help. If you do not believe me, then test it."

It seemed as if she was not yet awake. She could not comprehend; yet the voice was threatening, penetrating, sharp in its accent.

The orbs in the eyelets of the black mask flashed burningly on her as their owner spoke.

Ytol's heart pulsed quicker, her face grew paler—if it were possible—as her eyes wandered to the hideous being who stood near the door. Her veins chilled as she recognized the same unearthly features that had terrified her, in the afternoon, at the inlet tryst.

"Where are you taking me to?" she faltered, while a gathering fear was written in her every lineament.

"To your doom, Ytol Dufour!—the same doom which was meted to Nora Dufour, your mother, by other hands than ours."

"My mother!" echoed Ytol. "But, my name is not Dufour—"

"It is. You are Ytol Dufour, the child of Nora Dufour, who was the last daughter of David Dane. And we hate you for it—*we hate you!*"

"Ugh!" grunted Catdjo, taking a step nigher, and clinching his fists.

"Oh! tell me!" cried Ytol, "did you know my mother? What became of her—"

"Think of yourself now, and not her. She was cast from a vessel named the Gypsy Queen by a man bribed to the deed by a brother of her husband. It saved us trouble. You will soon join her. You are to perish like her!"

"I? You are going to kill me?"

The figure nodded.

"No, no, no!" she screamed. "This is some cruel dream. It would be murder—you wouldn't murder me! What have I done—"

"A dream too real to doubt!" interrupted

the malicious voice. "Look: do you see that piece of deformity?"—leveling and shaking a finger at Catdjo—"do you see the hump on his back, and the scars on his face? Do you mark that he is silent?—he has no tongue? It was shot from his mouth by a pistol-ball, and *your father* held the weapon. Look at him, I say: is he not a sight to be jeered at and spit upon? Can he ever be remade, or hope to regain the symmetry God gave him? And to your father he owes it all! Catdjo seeks vengeance! I have no special hate for you; but I must talk and act for him. He swore the oath of vendetta at the very altar where Silas Dufour wedded your mother—Silas Dufour, the drunkard! Do you think there is pity in *his* heart? Do not hope for it. You are his victim, and you are to die, to wipe out the wrong your flesh has perpetrated. See, Catdjo!—the picture!"

Ytol had listened, appalled. There was a look of terror in her starting eyes; she became rigid as marble.

The Dwarf, while Ytol's tormentor spoke, was worked upon by the recounting of his injuries. His dull orbs lighted up and burned malignantly. When she drew forth and held up to his gaze the medallion picture we have seen her exhibit in a former chapter, Catdjo's visage, contorted and red, assumed an expression of diabolical fury. A sound like the whining howl of an angry animal issued from his throat; he straightened and strained his arms at his side and gazed as if transfixed in passion.

"Can you pray?" interrogated the female, turning abruptly to the startled captive. "Then pray now. We are making for Delaware Bay. When we enter its waters, you are going overboard, with a bar of iron lashed to your feet!"

A sense of her absolute peril now centered in the young girl, and she wailed:

"I never harmed you!—we never met before! Don't do this deed—in the name of Heaven spare me! Take me back to my friends—"

"Take her back! Hear, hear, Catdjo. Ha! ha! ha!"

A guttural, chuckling, gagging sound came from Catdjo's thick lips. His face never relaxed its fierceness.

"Whoever you are," cried the now thoroughly affrighted girl, "have mercy. Let me return."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!"—a grating, heartless laugh; and then: "No mercy for the child of Silas Dufour! Ha! catch her! Don't let her escape!"

Ytol had leaped from the couch and darted in the direction of the door.

It was mechanical, the impulse of her terror, for her heart was pulseless and her mind delirious with the sudden comprehension of her real danger.

"Stop her, Catdjo!—stop her!"

The Dwarf caught her rudely by the arm—a grip that wrung from her a shriek of pain.

"Ugh!" he grunted, holding her struggling form in his vise-like grip.

"Not yet, Ytol Dufour," taunted the woman voice. "You never leave this apartment till you go to your death!"

Ytol was flung backward across the cabin, tottering dizzily. She grasped blindly at a chair—missed it, and fell to the floor, rendered insensible by the shock.

At the same time there sounded a sharp rap for admittance on the door panel.

The masked female turned the key in the lock, and was confronted by the captain of the yacht, a villainous-looking fellow with muddy eyes and a gruff voice; just the individual to aid in an abduction, or prove handy in a grosser deed.

"Come on deck," he growled.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

"There's somethin' s'picious follerin' after us like mad. I want you to see it."

She followed him on deck, and he led the way to the rudder-wheel.

"Look thar," pointing astern, "d'ye see that?"

The figure had removed the mask while ascending the short ladder, and now, by the dim rays of the lantern, we discover the face of Dwilla St. Jean.

She gazed hard through the murk in the direction indicated. At first she could discern nothing; but, as her vision accustomed

itself to the strain, she beheld something like a light, or a faintly wavering halo, that appeared to be following them closely, and which was perceptibly gaining on them.

"What is it?" Dwilla asked.

"What? Well, you ain't as smart as I thought you was, for a young business gal. That 'ere's a yacht."

"A yacht?"

"Yes; an' they're after us."

"Hal can it be we are pursued?"

"Comin' up purty lively, too," added the captain, rough and frowning.

"Are you sure?"

"Just as sure as I am that we're goin' to have a small hurricane after a bit—an' that's purty sure, isn't it? Hear the thunder?"

Dwilla had paid no heed to the rapidly approaching tempest till this moment. Even as the captain spoke a vivid flash lighted up the heavens and the sea, followed by a loud peal of thunder overhead.

"Do you hear Jove a-speakin'?"

"Change your course a little, captain," requested Dwilla, oblivious to his remark, as she kept her straining eyes on the glimmer astern.

He gave a quick order to the man at the helm. The yacht fell off a point or two, rocking giddily in its new track.

The pursuing craft imitated them at once—they knew it by the motion of her light.

"Dowse that lamp some, Jack."

The lantern was shaded instantly: and Dwilla and the captain waited in silence to see the result, peering through the black surrounding.

They were passing the line of the lighthouse, going by the fair wind; they could hear the crash of the breakers on the shore. The pursuers were laying a point closer, slowly but surely lessening the parallel.

Another lightning flash—illuminating the skies like day.

Dwilla uttered a low cry.

The pursuers were close upon them; and when all was again enveloped in darkness, a brilliant light, like a luminous star, shone at the mast-head of the hounding yacht.

Simultaneously, too, a rifle report rung through the moan of the winds, and a bullet gouged spitefully over the bulwark.

There was no longer any secrecy of intention on the part of those in chase.

"Guess you're satisfied now, ain't you?" snarled the captain, ducking his head as the leaden missile whizzed past.

"Are you going to take in sail?"

"Not exactly; I'll run her through under jib an' reef mains'l—or go to the locker—cuss me if I don't."

"Give her all she will carry," said the girl.

"Aren't you afeard?"

"I fear nothing. We must elude that yacht at the risk of our lives."

"Plucky gal that," commented the captain as Dwilla hastened below to confer with the Dwarf.

The storm was upon them. It came howling down with the force of a whirlwind. The yacht took it in her teeth, and stood like a supple reed in the sweeping blast. Clouds and billows of foam and spray broke over them, burying the deck in drenching currents. But she shot upward from the depths, and rode like a charmed bird amid the turmoiling elements.

The light astern had disappeared.

The captain—bare-headed, long hair streaming in the gale, and with mien of an imp created for such a scene—laid hold upon the tiller, at the chains, to assist.

"Hold fast! keep her up!" he roared; and he grinned like one who has passed through many such perils and lived to pride himself on his buoyant vessel.

CHAPTER XII.

A VISION IN THE STORM.

"'Tis fearful, on the broad-back'd waves,
To feel them shake and hear them roar;
Beneath, unsounded, dreadful caves,
Around, no cheerful shore."

—DANA.

"Alone in the dark, alone on the wave,
To buffet the storm alone"

—SMITH.

WHEN Dwilla St. Jean returned to the cabin she found Catdjo sitting in one corner, his limbs drawn up to his chin. His teeth

were chattering as if with ague, and his Satanic features were full of an expression of fear.

Ytol had recovered from the insensibility caused by her heavy fall. She was on her knees, praying. She knew they were in a terrible storm; she heard the sounds of straining timbers, the sough of the rushing wind, and her heart beat faster as peal after peal of thunder rumbled in her ears.

But she was not terrified. The danger of the tempest was nothing compared to the presence of those who were carrying her to an ostensible doom; she knew there was a ruling God in heaven who could protect her from the hungry elements.

The Dwarf was strangely affected. He seemed overwhelmed with fright, and shrunk closer to the wall each time the thunder burst.

"Get up!" cried Dwilla. "Are you going to let your victim escape by turning coward? Up, I say!"

He only uttered a low, whining noise, and gazed blankly at her with his distended eyes.

She contemplated him pityingly.

"Poor, miserable wretch!" passed rapidly in her mind. "Whenever there is a storm he is worse frightened than a child. And no wonder. It was in a gale like this that he became what he now is—hal on the ocean, too. He has good cause to fear now, with a recollection of that night when he was stricken down. He has never been wholly sane since; half-idiot, yet keenly alive to his thirst for vengeance."

Then, turning sharply to Ytol:

"Ay, pray on, girl. Mayhap we are all to perish together—hawks and victim. Do you hear the vessel strain? If we spring aleak, we are lost. And we go down, down in the dark deep, to the cavern of monsters. Hal hal hal! A pleasant death! Pray for your enemies, too." She laughed in a harsh, desperate, hysterical way. "Are you not afraid to die, girl?"

Ytol heard her not. She prayed on and on, her sweet face radiant with the sublime calm of faith, her soulful blue eyes glancing the earnestness of what her lips uttered.

A moment Dwilla paused, impressed, perhaps, by the young girl's attitude and whispering.

Did she think, in this hour of crisis, of that God from whose hand sped the fury of the warring winds?

Suddenly she started, and bent to listen.

Thud! Thump! Thud! Thump! Thud! Thump! fell upon her hearing; then the sound of running, scuffling feet above her. And again: thud! thump! thud! thump!

"What can it mean?" she questioned, half aloud.

The door flew open, and the captain—wild, haggard and drenching wet—rushed in.

"It's all up!" he bellowed.

"What is the meaning of that thumping noise?" Dwilla asked, calmly, though she perceived that he was greatly excited, and half read the answer in his face.

"It's all up, I say! Them's the pumps—the men are working like mad. But 'tain't no use; the bow's stove, an' we're goners! Here it is, now!"

As he spoke, he pointed to a dark line of water creeping swiftly over the sill.

"D'ye see it?—here it comes, a foot a minute!"

"Can nothing be done?"

"In ten minutes we'll sink! Old Nick himself couldn't save us!"

"Surely, there must be some hope!"

Her voice was not so steady; she stared, and spoke in a subdued, unnatural tone.

And, all the while, the pumps, gripped by maddened men:

Thud! Thump! Thud! Thump! Thud! Thump!

"Nary a hope!" he exclaimed: "You'd better clean out mighty quick, an' grab a spar."

Dwilla's composure deserted her. The yacht was sinking; death stared them in the face!

She forgot Ytol; she forgot Catdjo; only one thing rose uppermost in her startled mind, and that, the great anxiety of self-preservation.

The water was already half an inch deep on the cabin floor!

With a cry she sprung past the captain, and up the ladder-way.

On deck, she reeled with the twitching motion of the yacht—fell—regained her feet—then disappeared on the huge wave that swept from stem to stern!

Catdjo was close behind her. He acted as if crazed, chattering and gibbering with his tongueless lips. Running fore and aft several times, tossing his arms aloft, he sprung upon the bow with a frantic leap.

The doomed craft dipped a moment, then rose again with a slow struggle—but the Dwarf was gone! A prolonged howl of despair was wafted away on the wind.

"Overboard all!" shrieked the captain, in a frenzy. "Another minute, an' we'll go down with her! Jump, you rats!—jump!"

Like diving demons the men followed him, as he seized a plank and cast himself recklessly into the waves.

The yacht whirled dizzily round in the trough of the sea, her mast fairly dipping from side to side, in the towering billows that now drove her completely at their mercy.

Fiercer and fiercer howled the winds, louder and louder roared the surge, and deafening thunder belched quicker on the lightning's glare.

But, where was Ytol?

See!—a form in dripping white, with ghostly face, clutching at the wheel!

She was trying to right the rolling, pitching, careering craft, her small, delicate arms nigh breaking with the effort.

Her lips were sternly compressed; she faced the showering spray, and stood like a frail spirit defying the angry gods.

But, she was helpless. Wave upon wave poured over the half-buried deck—the mast at length crashed down with a force that tore the planking and bulwarks asunder, scattering shreds and splinters round her.

Then, out of the seething vortex came a mountain of water that wrenched her from her post, and carried her far, far on its bosom, away from the sucking pool of the sinking yacht.

Ytol vanished in the whirling eddies, her hands clasped, and a prayer gurgling on her lips as she went down. Then she shot upward into the storm-tossed air, clinging desperately to a spar which Heaven had thrown to her grasp.

Round the fragile thing she clinched her aching arms—blind to the lightning, deaf to the thunder, scarce knowing what she did.

But, suddenly, her eyes opened. She heard a voice calling her name high above the roar of the ocean and the whistle of the winds.

When next the lightning lighted up her dread surrounding, she saw a figure holding to the opposite end of the spar.

"Ytol! Ytol!" rung through the pall of gloom.

Again the lightning flashed! Again she saw the figure. More: she recognized a familiar face—recognized it, though she was incredulous.

"Wharle! Wharle Dufour!" she shrieked.

"Ytol! It is I! Hold tight, for your life, till I can work my way to you. I am coming—Oh! Ytol! Ytol!"

The last was a despairing cry that seemed floating a long distance from her.

"Wharle!—where are you?"

Only the screaming gale answered her. He had been torn from the spar and washed away.

How came Wharle Dufour there?

It was a singular meeting—amid the shadows of death, deep in the maelstrom of doom.

It was a brief glimpse; when next the heavens flamed, she saw that she was alone!

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE SEA-CALDRON.

"* * * the maddened wave
Leaps foaming up, to find its prey
Snatched from its mouth and borne away."
—H. F. GOULD.

"Thou to whom the world unknown,
With all its shadowy shapes, is shown;
Who seest appalled the unreal scene,
While fancy lifts the veil between."
—COLLINS.

ALL through the terrible night Ytol clung to the spar, tossed and buffeted about, drifting helpless and hopeless on the waves.

Her endurance seemed incredible; but the great strength of faith in Heaven was centered in her young heart, nerving her beyond mere mortal energy.

The hours dragged on. The storm, as if its fury was spent, had passed over; the black clouds broke and crawled away on the hissing airs, like misty monsters gliding and shrinking from their deeds of destruction.

The stars peeped forth; the winds lulled to a plaintive murmur, but the huge billows lashed together with a sullen sound.

Occasionally, as she floated on the amberous crests, she could see the rays from the light-house afar off—appearing and disappearing as she rose and fell; and this glimmered fainter and fainter, till she realized that she was being carried out to sea by the scarce-perceptible currents.

She felt that she was drowning. Such a tax upon her frail muscles could not last much longer. Each moment, in her unutterable anguish—an anguish half triumphing even in her soul of gold—she was about to relax her hold—then down, down to the cold terrors of a watery grave!

Morning dawned in splendor. No trace in the broad blue sky of the recent storm; all serene and mild, as if its sunlit vault had never known the mar of blast or darkness. The ocean sunk to its gentle undulations, like the anger of a giant falls to rest beneath the charm of fairy kisses—flowing calm as ere the claws of the tempest tore its bosom.

"It was a scene of peace—and like a spell
Did that serene and golden sunlight fall."

There was no land; all green around—the blue-green of the sea.

And there, alone, grown haggard and ghostly with her agonies, was Ytol.

Her eyes had lost their softness; their glance was hard and staring, and her bloodless lips were tightly compressed over clinched teeth. In her white face was written the clammy hue of despair, and her delicate nostrils were dilated by the fast yet weary breath.

But those straining eyes were riveted on a dark line that moved on the glistening waters.

As it approached nearer, she saw it was a steamer.

From masts and guys fluttered gaudy flags and streamers, and presently her ears caught the melody of music wafted on the cool breeze.

For one second, hope kindled in her breast, and she raised her weak voice in a wail of unearthly accent. Then that momentary hope sunk, and fresh torture wrung the aching heart.

The vessel was passing near her—so near that she could hear the laughter of merry people on the decks.

Again she screamed forth the plaintive appeal, startled by the unnaturalness of her own tone; but, what use? Surely her weak cry could not be heard under such circumstances.

But—joy! The steamer went slower, and she could discern the figure of an officer standing on the rail by the shrouds with a spy-glass.

She was discovered! In a frenzy she raised one arm aloft.

Then a boat was lowered, and she saw the bright blades of the oars flashing as they dipped in long, sweeping strokes.

Nigher it came. It was by her; almost striking her; then shot past like an arrow.

Ytol swooned. The relaxation was too severe. She had a dizzy, ringing sensation in her head; a myriad objects confused before her vision; she heard a cheery shout, then all was darkness.

A pair of muscular arms grasped round her perishing form—and she was saved!

"Where am I?" The first utterance of lips that had been long closed in a deathlike trance.

Ytol had been tenderly cared for by the captain and passengers of the steamer. She had revived about noon, as she lay on one of the soft bunks in a state-room; but her mind was delirious, and she spoke randomly of strange, incomprehensible things. At times she would cry out:

"Mercy!" as if beset with all the terrors of a fiendish vision. And again:

"Wharlet oh, Wharlet come back to me!"

Where are you? I can't see!—it is black—all black. And they separated us—no, no, Jerome, I cannot!—I cannot!"

The ship's physician was on duty at her bedside, watching the progress of the fever that settled in her frame, and for hours he sat there, timing her pulse, guarding her condition in person.

There were stealthy, muffled footsteps and low inquiries:

"How does the poor girl seem now, doctor?"

He shook his head and did not speak.

At four o'clock, however, he pronounced her out of immediate danger. Still, she must be taken care of exceedingly well ere he could say she was safe.

The flushed face on the pillow turned slowly toward the watcher, and the blue eyes, sparkling with a heavenly beauty, glanced bewilderedly at him.

"Where am I? What has happened?"

"Sh!—quiet, my dear," said the medical worthy, rising and going to her side. "Don't talk much. You've been ill, quite ill, my dear."

But she asked again:

"You took me from the ocean, didn't you? You saved me? I was drowning—oh, it was so cold, cold there; and now I'm burning up. What ails me? Isn't this a ship I'm in?" her glance wandering round the apartment.

"Yes, my dear, it's a ship—"

"And where is it going?" persisted Ytol.

"To Liverpool, my dear," he answered, hoping to quiet her.

"To Liverpool!—to Liverpool!" she repeated in a low tone, and closing her eyelids as she dwelt upon the word.

"Just try and go to sleep," he advised.

"You need a long term of rest and utter forgetfulness. You are in good hands, so feel perfectly contented for a little while."

"We are going to England," uttered the girl, with her eyes still closed, as if trying to think with that paining brain.

"Yes, to England, my dear," and, mentally, "Hang her obstinacy! She'll talk herself into delirium."

"Are you the captain?"

"No, my dear; I'm the doctor. Now, do go to sleep—"

"Won't you send the captain to me, please?"

"Impossible in your present state. I forbid—"

But Ytol would not yield. She insisted on seeing the captain; and the doctor, perceiving that she was working herself into a dangerous excitement, hastened to comply with her request.

"A most obstinate patient," he exclaimed, as his slim body strode nervously from the cabin.

Captain D'Arcy was a fine-looking gentleman of somewhat mature years; a thorough seaman and of generous nature.

He went to the side of the rescued castaway, wearing a genial smile and speaking pleasantly.

"Oh, she's getting along first-rate, doctor," taking Ytol's fevered hands in his own.

"Yes, if she'll only keep quiet," supplemented the M. D., intending the hint for his patient's ears.

"Captain, I want to speak to you alone," whispered Ytol.

The physician moved uneasily.

"She'll talk herself sick again," he declared, decisively.

"Oh, well, humor her a little," D'Arcy suggested smiling; "I won't let her say nor ask too much."

When they were alone:

"We are going to England, captain?"

"Yes, to Liverpool."

"What will you do with me?"

"With you?" a little astonished. "Why, you've got to make the trip. It's a clean voyage, there and back."

"And you can't put me off—"

"No. What made you ask such a question?"

"Because I haven't any money to pay you."

"Nonsense!—"

"Even when we return," she added.

Her manner puzzled him.

"Captain," Ytol spoke in a suppressed tone, "may I confide to you a secret?"

"Certainly."

She seemed hesitating; but, after a moment:

"I don't think I'll return to America."

"Why?" he asked, detecting a tinge of sadness there; and he pressed her hands gently.

"Because I have no home."

"No home? Haven't you any friends?"

"Oh, yes, there are a few, who have been kind to me. But they will not miss me; I was nothing to them. A few friends, captain; but now, none—none—none!" She answered bitterly, and a sob half burst from her lips.

"What is your name?" he questioned, after a pause, during which he glanced searchingly down at the flushed and beautiful face.

"Ytol Lyn."

"'Ytol Lyn.' You have a sweet name. Tell me of yourself, Ytol."

He drew forward a chair, and sat at her side.

Ytol freely confided to him her brief history. She unbosomed all. The tale was more than what she had related to Isabel Drew; it was a recounting of the past, with all her sufferings, up to the time and detail of her abduction.

When she had concluded the recital, she added:

"Thus, you see, I am situated in a hopeless world. I may as well live or die in England as America. Perhaps I may get something to do, and live. Though I haven't much to live for."

"What can you do?" he inquired, smoothing his gray beard, with eyes bent thoughtfully on the carpet.

"Indeed, I hardly know. I might get a position in some family, where the children are small, and teach. I have had very little opportunity for education, but I could teach young children, I am sure. And, besides, while teaching, I could pursue my own studies to advantage."

"Um!—yes—yes," with a sidelong glance.

"And if I fail in that, then I am not afraid of grosser work; I know what it is."

"Well, well, we'll see about it—we'll see. Don't bother about it now. Wait till you are better, my girl. Something may turn up. Then— But go to sleep, now."

He withdrew shortly, encouraging Ytol to hope for the future.

And as he returned on deck, he was saying, in his mind:

"Bless the child! I must try and aid her. Nothing can be done just at present; but when we reach Liverpool, I'll— Well, we'll see."

In the evening Ytol was slumbering and dreaming. Her visions of sleep were not smooth, for she tossed restlessly on her pillow.

The fearful scene of the previous night came back; she thought herself drifting on the tempestuous seas, clinging to the spar. Then the face of Wharlet Dufour—his call to her—his vanishment; and out of the furied chaos rushed hideous shapes, screaming and grinning.

Suddenly she started wide awake, roused by the frightful nightmare.

Simultaneously she beheld a dread apparition, a visage of ugliness peering at her through the half-open door!

Her tongue was palsied; the blood curdled in her veins.

The physician, still guarding the condition of his patient, was dozing in his chair the hour was late, and all was hushed in that peculiar, whispering calm, which pervades the cabin of a ship at sea during the time of repose.

And horror! there before her startled, staring gaze was this devilish image, the features of a man intense with the glower of hate.

Then in the stillness of the cabin rung one long, piercing shriek.

The alarm was so sudden that the lank physician performed a series of gyrations, and leaped to his feet, with hair standing.

Several came running in.

Ytol lay breathless, and white as marble.

When she opened her eyes, Captain D'Arcy was smoothing her hair back from her brow, the doctor's narrow face was bending close, and a kind featured lady was holding and chafing her hands.

"What is it, Ytol?" asked the captain, soothingly.

"There! There!" she cried, feebly, pointing toward the door. "*It was there!*"

"What was there, Ytol?"

"Oh, the demon face! It haunts me!"

"Nightmare!" sniffled the medical gentleman, immediately turning to the table for a sedative.

"Only a nightmare, dear," said the lady, mildly.

"No, no; it was real! It was a man. Oh, Captain D'Arcy! the same terrible Dwarf who I told you, was going to kill me!"

"Why, Ytol, impossible. He cannot be here—"

"He is!—he is!" panted Ytol. "He's on this ship; and, not a minute ago, he stood *there!*" again pointing, tremblingly, in the direction of the doorway.

"I guess you imagined it. You've been feverish. But calm yourself; we'll soon find out."

He left the state-room, half convinced that the girl must be right. Yet it seemed hardly possible that she had really seen the Dwarf.

How could he have gotten on board the steamer, to fasten his wild eyes on her for whose life he thirsted?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOLF AT ITS WATCH.

"White Devil! turn from me thy luring eye!"
—TUPPER.

"Darker it grew; and darker fears
Came o'er her troubled mind."

—BLOOMFIELD.

THE Petrel, Captain D'Arcy commanding, was making a truly pleasant voyage.

The only rough weather she encountered, of any consequence, was on that night when steaming down the Bay—the night that was long to be remembered by Ytol, when she was so near the portals of death, both at the hands of her avowed and vindictive enemies, and in the storm-tossed sea.

The lady passengers especially had interested themselves in the young girl, visiting her side constantly, contributing niceties from their sachels, and otherwise bestowing every attention possible.

Ytol recovered rapidly from her prostration, under careful nursing; and when they were five days "out" she was able to ascend to the deck, on the captain's arm, to enjoy the invigorating airs and awing contemplation of the watery vast.

None knew her actual condition of sadness, save Captain D'Arcy. He answered all the countless questions which arose regarding Ytol, and studiously avoided giving any definite information of the tender being thus singularly thrown under his care.

He was a widower; had lost two children—so Ytol learned—and where had once been a happy family, to cheer him after returning from each voyage, there now existed a blank, a void that he could not banish from constant realization, except by close application to his duties as an officer, and living solely among his crew.

Ytol's presence had worked a change in him. He was seen to smile oftener. He spent a great deal of time in her society.

She felt deeply his fatherly sympathies and ward, and thanked Heaven for sending her another friend, who was warm and true, and under whose care her soul could repose in calm.

A beautiful moonlight night. The waters silvered over by the mellow rays, and a spell that was even holy pervading the vessel's deck.

The passengers had retired below—only a stray couple lingering in the shadows, whispering significantly, or, perhaps, wooing the inspiration of the scene of solitude.

Captain D'Arcy and Ytol were standing on the quarter-deck looking over the rail at the silent depths. They had been strolling about, and now paused, as if at the same moment their minds were absorbed by reverie.

"How black it looks down there!" Ytol said half-aloud, and shuddering as she fancied she saw the body of a dark monster, whose slimy back glistened in the gloom.

"Black, did you say? Yes—black and cold. There are graves down there, Ytol;

many a loved one is sleeping underneath us. And the hungry ocean is not yet satisfied; more are to perish; hearts and homes are yet to be made desolate, when the fury of the tempest passes. Yes, it is cold and dreary."

He was gazing steadfast downward, and spoke very lowly.

Involuntarily, she drew her shawl closer over her shoulders with a sudden chilly sensation.

"Oh, boundless deep! we know
Thou hast strange wonders in thy gloom concealed;

Gems, flashing gems, from whose unearthly glow

Sunlight is sealed."

"I sometimes wish I was under the deep, too," the captain added after a pause.

"Oh, Captain D'Arcy!"

"I do. You don't know, my dear girl, what my feelings are when I yield to such meditations—especially now. I am unusually depressed to-night. I had two noble boys. They were idols to me. One of them now sleeps there."

He pointed beneath, and his voice sunk in a tone of sorrow.

"Yes he was washed overboard. We could not save him. There were fifty lives in peril on the straining ship—no time to man a boat. But we cut the boat loose, with its lashed oars; we threw planks, casks, buoys. I never saw my boy again."

Silence fell upon them. Ytol saw that he was struggling with emotion, and his speech wavered sadly.

There was a heart to feel quickly for others; tears of sympathy started to her eyes.

She did not venture to speak at once, lest even her tremulous words might grate upon him in his mind's grieving.

Yet she must say something; her lips would murmur:

"I'm very, very sorry for you, Captain D'Arcy. Heaven knows, I have suffered enough to wish that those around me might not share in the world's woes."

"His will be done!" was the solemn response. Then, brushing away a tear from his cheek "Come, Ytol, it's late. You had better retire now—" stopping short, arrested by the deathly pallor of his companion's face.

It was a picture of terror he beheld by the light of the moon; and she was staggering, clutching at the rail for support.

"Ytol!—what is it? What ails you?"

"Look!"

Around the corner of the wheel-house peered a face! The moon showed it plainly—a fierce visage that glared upon them with eyes like the orbs of a demon.

For a second he was motionless, riveted—The thing vanished—

Then he sprang forward, with a sharp exclamation.

But he could find nothing.

"Captain! Captain D'Arcy! I am haunted!" when he returned to her side.

"Haunted?"

"By that terrible shape."

"Nonsense! Don't tremble so. It was a man in the flesh—and an ugly imp, I vow. He's not of my crew nor passengers. But I've seen him now, and, depend upon it, we'll hunt him out. Let me take you to your room."

Leading Ytol to her state-room, D'Arcy immediately sought the officer on duty, and communicated to him what he had seen, giving orders for another search after the mysterious apparition.

He was worried. Ytol had told him of the Dwarf, and his diabolical intentions, and that such a character should be concealed aboard the ship filled him with apprehensions for the safety of all on board. But what puzzled him most was, how this human demon could have gotten upon the steamer. It was a mystery.

"Confounded strange!" he muttered. "He's dangerous. A wild man. We must find him. He must be insane. Ugh!—I shan't forget the sight as long as I live."

But again were the efforts of officers and crew futile.

The Dwarf was not to be found, though every crack, corner, hole and shelf was looked into, above and below—even aloft.

D'Arcy returned to Ytol, frowning. It was near morning.

"We can't find the rascal—though the hunt isn't over yet."

Ytol gazed strangely into his face.

"You won't find him," she said, hollowly. "He perished, that night, in the storm. I heard his death-cry on the wind. *I am haunted!*"

"Bah! I don't believe in the unnatural, and, thank Providence, my crew don't take any stock in spirits, alcoholic or perditionized. We'll haul this wild fellow out of his lair, before we make port."

Then, after a few more practical assurances:

"I don't consider you safe, alone. But, it won't do to let the passengers know you are affected by this presence. I recommend that you have the cabin-maid here with you, for company."

"Oh! I should be so glad!" said Ytol, gratefully.

"You'll find her a neat, tidy girl—"

"Yes. Let her stay with me, please. I shall feel safer."

"Not necessary for you to explain to her, you know. Calm yourself; I'll send her directly."

The cabin-maid came, and Ytol experienced a great relief in her companionship. D'Arcy instructed the girl to keep near Ytol, as much as possible, on all occasions; and the two became quite sociable together during the remainder of the voyage.

But they little dreamed that, while search for the Dwarf was progressing, a pair of glittering, scintillating, basilisk orbs were staring fiercely at them from the cavity underneath the bunk!

A dark form was stretched there, still and watching—the hideous form of Catdjo, the Demon Dwarf!

No wonder they failed to discover the hiding-place of the unwelcome presence. The lair of the serpent was in the very nest of its intended prey!

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOME OVER THE WATERS.

"Another season of the year
Is now upon the earth and me."

—LONDON.

"Yet no! Despair shall sink not
While Life and Love remain!"

—NORTON.

CATDJO was seen no more on board the Petrel.

He was aware of their close searching after him, and had heard discussed the fate in store for him when caught, which amounts to the universal exclamation:

"Toss him over!"

Only by a ghostly stealth was he able to obtain food and drink; and yet, he lived the voyage through, thus ever keeping the unsuspecting girl in sight—nursing while he chained his hate, and patiently waiting the opportunities of the future.

At Ballycotton, the steamer was boarded by Pat Sanders, the channel pilot—the inimitable Pat, mention of whom here may bring a smile to the lips of many readers who have, perhaps, seen him, and can recall the numerous laughable anecdotes connected with him and his "darlin' in the Cove o' Cork."

"Now, cap'n," he cried—as he has been heard to cry, "square away an' let her go 'id a rip fur Tuskar."

Past the dangerous rocks of Tuskar; narrowly escaping a collision with one of the mail ships at Hollyhead; another pilot at Point Lynas—then the hurry to save flood-tide. And Pat, on the fore-castle, with his eyes staring through the fog:

"Whist, therel d'ye hear a horn?"

"I don't hear any, Mr. Sanders," said the second mate, from the port bow.

"Mr. Sanders!—an' I'm pilot! Hist! d'ye hear it, on the starboard bow—easy there—we're runnin' into it, an' I can't see a stitch. What the devil is it, anyhow—d'ye hear?—it's past."

Some one laughed lowly as a figure moved aft, carrying an uncorked bottle, in the neck of which the wind blew like the sound of a smothered horn.

In due time the Petrel lay snug at Brunswick dock, and the shore crew was busy on her decks.

It was the second day following the steamer's

er's arrival. Ytol had not yet left the ship. Captain D'Arcy was sitting with her in the late room.

"I was on shore this morning," he explained, "and attended to a little business for you."

He spoke cheerfully, and Ytol saw a pleased look in his face.

"Business for me, Captain D'Arcy?"

"Yes."

"Why, what can it be?" she asked, surprisedly.

"And I think I've got some encouraging news, my child."

"News?"

"To begin with, you'll stop at the Queens Hotel to-night. To-morrow we'll see about these little affairs."

He drew a newspaper from his pocket, saying, as he gave it to her:

"Just read those two over—where I've marked them—the advertisements."

Ytol read. Her eyes glistened. Here were chances for the very position which, she had told Captain D'Arcy, she hoped to obtain: advertisements for some one to fill the position of governess, where the children were quite young. One was in Eastham; the other on the — Road.

"Oh, captain!" she exclaimed, hopefully, "I wonder if I can get one of these?"

"I have visited both, my child—"

"You?"

"And I think you'll find it more enjoyable at the last-named place. It's an American family; the eldest of the young children is about eleven. I had some conversation with the lady—a widow, by the way."

"And it is possible that I may get the place?" Ytol said, questioningly, and breathing fast.

"Oh, yes; I partially spoke it for you."

"How kind you are! Oh! Captain D'Arcy, you've done a great deal for me."

"Haven't done anything yet, my dear girl. But, do you feel yourself equal to the task before you?"

"I *must*," she replied, with firmness; "I have to earn a living for myself; and, with God to guide me, I *must* succeed."

"Very well; we'll drive out there to-morrow. In an hour from now we'll go to the hotel."

About four o'clock Ytol and the captain repaired to the hotel, where he had engaged a room for her. Still later, they went out to make a few purchases of which she stood sorely in need—Ytol not refusing the aid he so generously insisted on giving.

When he had gone, and she sat alone in her room, she yielded, for a brief space, to an overpowering emotion, and wept lowly.

She fully realized how much Captain D'Arcy was doing for her; that it was his money upon which she then lived, that he had not yet done all. It was gratitude toward him, and the great tide of thankfulness to Heaven that brought the tears to her eyes.

And she felt, too, how utterly alone she was in that foreign land, with no one to shelter or protect, no one to sympathize with her except good Captain D'Arcy.

How sad it would be, she thought, when the Petrel went away, bearing from her this sole being, among all around her, who would care to lighten the heavy hours of her life?

But, bright-eyed Hope soon cheered her from her melancholy mood; she roused her energies to face the stern ordeal before her.

When she slept that night her dreams were sweet. In repose, her trials were lulled away, and calm and rest enfolded her weary spirit.

In the morning D'Arcy called for her with a carriage. As ever, he greeted her with smiles and pleasant words.

It was a delightful drive out of the city, along the smooth road, past the luxuriant hedges; and all the while he talked about the new country to which she had come, and of happiness for her future.

Wilde Manor—their destination—was not much more than an hour's ride from Liverpool, and the estate of an American lady. She was a widow, with three children—one very near womanhood, and the others those over whom Ytol was to wield the scepter of governess.

A beautiful place, and Ytol thought how much like Rose Grove it seemed, in its sur-

roundings near the tall-loomed house—only, there was a different atmosphere, a pervading something which rather awed her as they entered the broad gate and passed up the serpentine drive to the massive steps.

But she forced back her timid feeling, and a resolute look settled in her face.

They had not long to wait the pleasure of Mrs. Layworth.

A tall, regal woman of about forty years; a brunette, with eyes that flashed with a worldly look.

"Ah! Captain D'Arcy."

"Madam"—rising.

"I am pleased to see you. And this is—"

"Miss Lyn."

Ytol arose to take the hand of the beautiful woman, which was extended cordially.

"What is your first name?"

"Ytol."

"Ytol!"

A sudden change came over the lady her eyes widened as if in some mysterious surprise, and her clasp on Ytol's hand tightened.

"Ytol?—Ytol, did you say?"

"Yes, madame; Ytol Lyn."

But, whatever it was that caused Mrs. Layworth to start and stare upon hearing the name, she was herself again instantly.

"You were speaking to me about Miss Lyn, captain?" seating herself then.

"Yes; she comes to take the position in question—comes with my special recommendation. I think you will find her capacities admirable."

"Captain D'Arcy's recommendation is all-sufficient," she said, with a gracious "society" bow. "When will she be ready to enter upon her duties?"

"Well—" hesitating, and glancing at Ytol.

"At once, madam," answered the young girl.

"So much the better"—to Ytol—"I had half-arranged it with the captain. And if you are prepared we will begin by showing you your room. I will introduce my children to their new preceptress this afternoon."

A servant was summoned, who showed Ytol to the room intended for her use. For Captain D'Arcy had really done far more on his previous visit to Wilde Manor than he had told Ytol of; in fact, he had made a positive arrangement for Ytol, recommending her highly.

When the young girl had withdrawn:

"The Petrel goes out in three days, Mrs. Layworth; I shall pay my young friend, Ytol, a visit ere then. I am very much interested in her—*very* much. I do hope you'll be pleased with each other."

"I add, amen!" she laughed. "Let us trust that you will find leisure to call more than once before your departure."

He bowed.

"I like Miss Lyn's looks—Is she not timid?"

"Not so timid as modest. She is a splendid girl in all respects."

After half-an-hour of lively conversation on topics aside from the business of Ytol's coming, he arose.

"I fear I have already overstayed myself," he said. "It is time I was returning to—"

"Returning? Don't think of it! You'll dine with us—with me, at least, for Ione, my only company at table, is in the city."

The captain yielded to an invitation for dinner. Then he could not decline her offer of entertainment for the afternoon, with a visit to the Park, the lake, the lodge, and romantic wanderings along the shady path.

It was quite dusk, when he escaped the enjoyment of Mrs. Layworth's society!

Ytol and the children had been made acquainted, and they were off strolling somewhere when he left. But he was coming again, to see Ytol and to bid her good-by.

Ione Layworth, Mrs. Layworth's eldest child—a counterpart of her mother, except that she was more lovely in the flush and brilliancy of youth—was standing at one of the long hall windows, in the second story, when Captain D'Arcy waved his adieu.

She had been absent on a shopping tour all day, and returned a few moments before the captain's departure.

"Mother," she said, in a thoughtful way,

as Mrs. Layworth ascended the stairs, "you have secured the governess for Cecil and Walter."

"Yes," answered the mother, a little abstractedly, going to her daughter's side, and also gazing out at the window.

Ytol and the children were moving along one of the paths. Their eyes were fixed on her.

"I want to tell you something," continued Ione. "Or, perhaps you have noticed it?"

"What?"

"The remarkable likeness—"

"Ah!"

"I passed her in the carriage, as we came up the drive—"

"We?"

"Yes. Lord Somers is in the parlor."

"Is he? But, what were you going to say about this girl, Ione?"

"I was immediately struck with her striking resemblance to the veiled picture in your room."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mrs. Layworth, quickly, and looking hard into Ione's face. "It attracted you, did it?"

"Yes."

"Ione—" she spoke almost in a whisper, "her name is Ytol!"

"Ytol! Impossible!"

"So she tells me; so Captain D'Arcy, her friend, tells me."

"How strange—how very strange!"

"It is a mystery. We must learn more of her. I was dumfounded when I first saw and heard; but I concealed it. We must get at this girl's history. Who knows but what—" pausing significantly.

"Ay," added Ione, in a strange tone, "*who knows?*"

Ytol, unconscious of their gaze, or that she was the subject of a mysterious, low-voiced conversation, was walking slowly on amid the shrubbery.

She was talking pleasantly with the children, and had already won a reasonable portion of their love—the first essential fact for those who would assume the proper training of the young.

Suddenly Mrs. Layworth pointed out through the window, and cried:

"Look, Ione—quick! What does that mean? See!—she reels!—she faints—*she falls!*"

Ytol was staggering backward dizzily; she fell heavily to the smooth walk.

And, while the mother and daughter gazed in astonishment, the voices of the children, screaming loudly, floated to their ears.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE APPARITION AGAIN.

"Even the skies
O'erhang the desolate splendor of her domes
With an ill-omen's aspect, shaping forth
From the dull clouds, wild menacing forms and
signs."
—HEMANS.

"In some lone soul whom no one sees—
Oh! chase away the slow disease."
—L. LOOMFIELD.

MRS. LAYWORTH called to a passing maid, the maid to the hall porter, the porter to an attendant lackey, who ran out to the scene of confusion.

Ytol was lying prone across the path, as though stricken senseless by some invisible hand. The children, affrighted by the spectacle, were clinging to her motionless form, crying loudly, and calling her name.

But before the lackey reached them, Ytol had recovered. She arose slowly, and whispered hoarsely to the little ones; then, after standing dizzily for some moments, she walked toward the house.

Her face was blanched in its expression of terror; her eyes were staring and startled; her whole appearance that of one who restrains, by a great effort, the impulse to shriek aloud, and fall helpless under the influence of a gnawing dread.

"Miss Lyn, what was it? What in the world has happened?"

Mrs. Layworth had descended to the hall, and confronted Ytol with the inquiry.

"Nothing much, madam—nothing," she articulated, in a faint, unnatural voice. "I—I am unwell. A sudden illness. Permit me to retire to my room."

"Certainly. Shall I have you waited upon?"

"No, no; never mind. I will be better soon," and she hastened on up the stairway.

Ione was still standing by the window, on the second floor. She gazed hard at the white face, as it went by, and muttered:

"It is strange—very strange. How much like the picture!"

When Ytol had gone, Ione sought her mother's room.

Crossing the apartment, she gently grasped a long fold of crape that hung down over a massive oil painting; and drawing this aside, she gazed upward in silence.

It was the picture of a young and beauti-

Ione allowed the crape to fall back again, and turned away.

"Where are you going?"

"To change my dress. I fear Lord Somers will grow weary with waiting. He has come for a long visit."

"Stay," interrupted her mother, laying a hand upon her arm. "Has he spoken to the point yet?"

"Not yet, mother."

"Do you think he will?"

"Most assuredly. I expect it to-day, by what has already been spoken."

"And when he does?"

"I shall accept him."

At the first opportunity, when alone with her, he inquired the cause of her apparent indisposition—apparent, because unrest, pain, ay, *fear* was written in her features, the stamp of a tortured mind.

They were walking together before the house, and Ytol leaned heavily on his arm.

"You look sad," he said. "Don't you like your new home?"

"Oh, yes; Mrs. Layworth is very kind."

"Then what is the trouble?"

"I am not complaining, Captain D'Arcy."

"With the lips, no; but I read it in your face."

The blue eyes turned timidly upon him,



"YOU VIXEN!" SHE SCREAMED, DARTING FORWARD. BUT THE STRONG ARM OF FARMER LYN HELD HER BACK.

ful woman, with blue eyes, hair that was golden and massy, and in the mouth a mold of angelic sweetness.

Ione seemed riveted in contemplation. She beheld here a resemblance to Ytol, so strong that it was marvelous.

While she gazed thus, Mrs. Layworth entered. Pausing, she, too, looked steadfast at the picture.

"Ione, it is wonderful."

"Strange, strange, indeed."

"But come, hide it. I do not care to look at it. I once loved that face; now I hate it!"

"The face of your sister."

"Hide it, Ione—hide it."

Ione withdrew.

Mrs. Layworth followed her with her large, lustrous eyes, and a train of varied thoughts ran riot in her mind, just then—half of her child, and the prospective match with Lord Somers, and half of the new governess, whose arrival had, in so short a time, created a double mystery in the household of Wilde Manor.

Then her eyes wandered to the veiled portrait, and she shook her head strangely.

True to his promise, Captain D'Arcy called on the following day, to bid Ytol adieu.

He found the young girl pale and nervous

for a second, then drooped. She did not reply.

"Come, Ytol, you must tell me."

"I will. Captain D'Arcy, I have a wretched, wretched life before me—"

"Oh, don't grow despondent!" he interrupted. "Cheer up. I guess it is a struggle for you; but you'll meet it bravely, I know, when—"

"No, no, I don't mean that. I do not shrink from my work."

"Tell me what weighs upon you?"

"It is that I—I am—haunted."

"Nonsense!"

"Don't laugh at what I say," she almost wailed.

"Ytol."

"Oh, Captain D'Arcy! that horrid thing we saw on the ship. It is haunting me. I feel its presence near me at this moment. Yesterday, it looked at me from that very bush—there," pointing to a clump of shrubbery at the side of the path.

"What?—it is here at Wilde Manor?"

"Yes," said Ytol, with a shiver. "It is here."

The information annoyed him. He was not superstitious; he concluded that the Satanic image was trailing Ytol, to wreak harm upon her. As nothing had been seen of the Dwarf since the night of his appearance on the quarter-deck of the *Petrel*, D'Arcy had hoped that he would not again find the young girl.

It was, however, beyond his power to ferret out the being of her terror. He could only encourage her not to fear it, and to keep herself sheltered; and this he strove to do, even while his own heart was full of misgiving for her safety.

"I shall feel that I have no one to protect me, at all, Captain D'Arcy, when you leave. I shall miss you so much—you have been kind to me as if I were your child."

"Keep a stout heart, my dear child. I will come and see you whenever the *Petrel* is at Liverpool; and while I am away, as I pray to God to preserve me in my dangerous voyage, so, also, will I pray for you—that He may watch over, and guard you from peril. If you ever have trouble here, go to the Queen's Hotel, and tell them that you are my ward. You will be treated kindly there, for they know me well. I will always be your friend, Ytol; and when the world looks darkest you can come to my arms and call me 'father.'"

"God bless you, Captain D'Arcy! God bless you!" and one great sob of emotion burst from Ytol's lips, as she looked up into the kind face.

When Captain D'Arcy went away, she retired to her room and sat in the twilight gloaming, gazing out dreamily over the lawn.

Despite the captain's assuring friendship, her reveries were netted in mourning; she could not dispel the gloom that shadowed her lonely spirit, and this augmented by the thought of danger that hovered nigh.

She had a view of the path in which she walked in the afternoon of the day gone; the bushes in which she caught sight of the unearthly features that were haunting her—the features of Catdjo, the Demon Dwarf.

That he had tracked her to Wilde Manor was evident.

As her eyes rested upon the bush a chillness crept into her veins; she imagined the hideous apparition again there, glaring at her.

With a shudder she left the window.

On the morrow she was to begin with the children. She needed rest and newer energies for the task ahead, and sought her couch at an early hour.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRIEND OR FOE?

"And if a tear, that speaks regret
Of happier times, appear,
A glimpse of joy that we have met
Shall shine and dry the tear."

—COWPER.

"I saw it—"

'Twas no foul vision—with unblinded eyes
I saw it; his fond hands, as once in mine,
Were wreathed in hers."

—MILMAN.

A WEEK elapsed.

Ytol devoted herself arduously to Cecil and Walter, and the youthful scholars were growing to love their preceptress more and more each day.

Mrs. Layworth noticed with pleasure the attachment that had sprung up between teacher and pupils, and amply indicated her satisfaction by her actions toward the young governess.

Ytol was encouraged by approval, and Wilde Manor assumed a sunny look for her.

"You are getting along finely, Miss Lyn."

As she was passing through the hall one afternoon, after the recitations of the day, to take her charges out for a stroll. Mrs.

Layworth met her at the parlor door, and addressed her pleasantly.

"I am glad you think so, madam," returned she, smiling; "I am doing my best; and I believe your children rather love than fear me. We progress happily, at least."

"Are you going to the lake?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Walter, "to the lake—let's go to the lake and get in a boat."

And Cecil echoed:

"To the lake!"

With Mrs. Layworth's consent they directed their steps thither. It was about half a mile from the house; a broad pond, surrounded by luxuriant foliage—lying like a glistening mirror beneath the trees. There was a boat-house, with steps leading to the water's edge, and light shells of boats, with cushioned seats, and feather-like oars, painted gaudily; a kiosk, on a small island—its ebon hued pillars twined by spirals of blooming vines, and on the top a ball of bronze that reflected the sun's rays like a blinding flame.

"Can you row, Miss Lyn?" shouted Walter, as he ran down the steps, in high glee.

"I am afraid not. I never tried—"

"May I give you a few lessons?" inquired a rich voice at Ytol's side.

"It's Lord Somers!" Walter cried. "He'll show you how. He can row."

Ytol had met the Englishman on several occasions, but never to speak with him until now.

He was a handsome man, exceeding polite. His dark-gray eyes were like magnets as they fixed upon the young girl, and she felt not a little embarrassed under his gaze.

"Lord Somers."

"I heard you say you could not row. Let me teach you. I have come here for the same sport; so we'll call it 'interest in common,' and I'll do the work. Will you get in?"

At first she thought it best to decline. It might offend Mrs. Layworth; it might seem improper, considering that a positive engagement between him and Ione had been announced. In addition, a disagreeable realization of the insignificant position she occupied, comparatively, made the blushes dye her cheeks, while she stood hesitating. But my lord was persuasive. She yielded, and they were soon skimming merrily away.

He plied the oars with the science of a master, nor neglected a happy conversation, eloquent with the romance of their surroundings.

Her reserve vanished; she found herself chatting familiarly as in the first hours of her acquaintance with Jerome Foster, at Rose Grove—arguing with enthusiasm, or listening raptly to accounts of journeys to the Highlands, the oddities of Brighton Beach, and a hundred other gossip topics, at home and abroad, that engaged, interested, or caused her to smile.

The sun was low when they returned to the boat-house. The afternoon had been one of thorough enjoyment to Ytol, and the Englishman had entered zestfully into the spirit of the occasion.

"When am I to have this same pleasure again?" he asked, as they moved away.

"Better not again. It would not be proper, I fear."

"Why, pray? Haven't you enjoyed yourself?"

"Indeed I have, and I thank you."

"I hope we'll repeat it, then, soon."

"No, no," said Ytol, quickly.

"Promise me you'll come here to-morrow, and alone—"

"My lord!"

"Do you agree?"

"I must not. Please leave me. See—there is Mrs. Layworth—Miss Ione is with her. It will not appear proper for you to be cultivating the acquaintance of the governess. I bid you good-day."

"Not until you promise to come."

"Consider, sir, what you are doing—"

"Will you promise?"

"Then I promise—to avoid a scene here I will come."

Taking Cecil and Walter by their hands, she hurried on; and as she went, she asked herself:

"Why does Lord Somers wish me to

meet him—and alone? He acts very strangely."

Somers raised his hat as Ytol left him, then turned to join Mrs. Layworth and her daughter, who were approaching by another path.

"All hail!" laughed the mother, as he came up. "We've been roaming without escort."

"I am not out of favor yet, I presume. Please accept. Have you been far?"

Ione was stiffly silent.

"Over to the lodge. I received an application by this morning's mail from a party wanting to rent. It has been so long unoccupied and neglected that I fear it is hardly tenable. The vines are grown wild, the fence is broken, and cobwebs in every direction."

"Miss Layworth does not seem talkative?" remarked Somers, with a sidelong glance at the young lady.

"I was thoughtful," she answered, carelessly.

"May I buy your reveries?"

"Oh, I'll give them away. I was thinking how enjoyable it would have been to row upon the lake this afternoon."

"Believe me, had I imagined your desires, it would have been our programme."

"Your lack-knowledge in that particular did not deter you, it seems," with an accent of spice.

"Well, no—I was out rowing with Miss Lyn."

Ione inclined her head coldly. Mrs. Layworth did not catch his words.

"I hope you found her society agreeable?" in an icy tone.

"I assure you I did."

Ione bit her lip, to conceal a jealous pang, and her lustrous eyes gleamed like daggers as they flashed momentarily upon him.

"What is the name of the party wanting the lodge, Mrs. Layworth?"

"A female. She signs herself Dwilla St. Jean."

"Dwilla St. Jean," he repeated. "Rather an attractive name."

"Nearly as pretty as Ytol Lyn," added Ione, with a keen emphasis.

"What's the matter, Ione?" asked Mrs. Layworth.

Somers twirled his side-whiskers indifferently.

"Oh, nothing," replied the daughter, with one of those soulless sighs characteristic of the "society" belle.

"But you act singularly—"

"Let us hasten," broke in the Englishman, abruptly. "I fear something has happened. There seems to be some excitement. Look."

The trio hurried forward.

When they reached the house, the hall porter met them, interposing his corpulent body before several servants who were advancing boisterously.

"What does all this mean?" demanded Mrs. Layworth, frowning.

"Why, 'e see, mum, there's— Now horder there! horder!" he cried, with widened eyes and standing hair, as he tried to quiet the men and maids and explain simultaneously. "'E see, mum, there's been a goost as 'as been a-coomin' round 'ere, an' t' governess, poor lass, 'as been frighte'd by't. That's all, honly she's near dead, mum—horder, there, do 'e 'ear, now?"

"Miss Lyn has been frightened, you say?"

"'Es, mum; that's hall."

"Where is she?"

"In 'er room, mum, where we carried 'er, poor lass, all of a 'eap, mum."

"Dismiss this rabble immediately. I do not like such disturbance."

"'Es, mum— D'ye 'ear 'er ladyship? Horder, there, now. Off with 'e, I say. Will 'e not begone when 'er ladyship tells 'e go?"

"Mother, I wish to speak with you. Lord Somers, you will please excuse us for a few moments."

"Oh, certainly."

Ione drew her mother to one side.

"It is solved," she said, lowly.

"How? what do you mean?"

"Ytol Lyn is haunted."

"Ione!"

"I am sure of it. Mark her worn and

weary expression—she constantly wears it; and it cannot be overwork. Note the restless glances of her eyes; her timidity; her continual watching in this direction and that I have seen all this. And now we are told of a ghost. Is it not convincing? Let us lose no more time, but make this girl explain the mystery of her life."

"Yes, we ought to attend to it at once," acquiesced the mother.

"Interview her in your room," suggested Ione, "and show her the veiled picture."

"It shall be done," assented Mrs. Layworth, catching a hint from her daughter's words.

"Stay, mother, one thing more; did you know that Lord Somers and Miss Lyn were out on the lake together this afternoon?"

"No," in surprise.

"Well, they were." Ione compressed her lips, and began patting with her foot.

"You are not jealous, Ione? I don't think you need fear Miss Lyn."

"I am not jealous, nor would I allow myself to 'fear.' But I do not like what has occurred. I am astonished at him, and I censure her."

"I'll speak to Miss Lyn about it."

At precisely nine o'clock that evening, Ytol received a summons from Mrs. Layworth.

The young girl was in the nursery at the time, assisting Cecil and Walter at their study.

"There, dears, that will do. You may go to bed, now," she said, kissing them good-night.

"Oh! Miss Lyn, don't look so sad," cried Walter, throwing his arms round her neck.

"Do I look sad?" trying to smile.

"Yes, you do; you look as if you were sick. Are you sick, Miss Lyn?"

"I do not feel well. But I'll be better to-morrow." And, as she started to obey the message from Mrs. Layworth:

"Sick?"—dwelling on the child's speech, "yes; oh! how sick. My heart is failing me. I can not live long in this way—with that horrible specter appearing at every turn. Am I to be haunted to death? Have I done anything to merit the misery which this thing's presence gives me? Oh! Heaven shield me. Let me find some respite, some escape."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN AWFUL REVELATION.

"How, ever and anon, awakes the soul,
As with a peal of thunder, to strange horrors
In this long, restless dream."

—YOUNG.

"What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't?"

—SHAKESPEARE.

Mrs. LAYWORTH'S apartments were in rather a secluded portion of the commodious house, between a double-angle, or recessed wall overgrown with dense vines—where there pervaded a gloomy atmosphere by day, and a grave-like solitude by night.

She and her daughter were sitting at a large round table covered with a fancily-wrought cover of green; and a giant lamp, burning beneath its mellow shade, cast a wavering light around.

They were awaiting Ytol.

When the young governess entered, she paused near the door, and silently returned the searching gaze with which the two regarded her.

"You sent for me, Mrs. Layworth?"

"Yes. Advance, please, and be seated. We wish to talk with you."

When Ytol had appropriated a chair:

"You look unwell, Miss Lyn."

"I am not well, madam."

"We desire to touch upon the cause."

"You are very kind. A more indisposition, madam; I shall be better by to-morrow."

"She is telling a falsehood," thought Ione, who was watching her keenly.

"I want you to tell us, Miss Lyn, what it is that is disturbing your peace of mind. You cannot conceal it from us; something is worrying you."

Ytol started, scarce visibly, and the blue eyes raised. The question was repeated.

"If I tell you, madam—"

"Then I shall be satisfied. So, you do admit that there is a mystery connected with you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Layworth," she confessed, subduedly.

"You must explain it to us. First, answer me this: is your name 'Lyn'?"

Again she started, again her glance fell; her head bowed, and she answered, lowly:

"It is not."

"Ah!" Ione touched her mother with her foot beneath the table.

"Then, what is it?"

"Oh, Mrs. Layworth!" she cried, looking pleadingly at her questioner, "promise me that I shall not be sent away; promise that you will not drive me from Wilde Manor when you learn what an unfortunate girl I am! Do not shun me and withdraw your protection—I need it, oh! so sorely; and I will tell you all."

"Proceed," with an assenting inclination of the head.

Once more Ytol revealed her brief, sad history—poured out the story of her miserable lot, and the entanglements which fate had woven and seemed even still weaving in her unhappy existence.

Her listeners were strangely interested. Ione, markedly silent throughout, sat like a statue, deeply attentive.

"After all," reminded Mrs. Layworth, you have not told me your real name."

"Because I do not know what it is. Herbert Lyn gave me his name; I was never called by any other. Yet—stay," remembering the words of her masked tormentor on that fearful night at sea, "I recollect now—once, by the enemies I told you of—"

"They who are haunting you?"

"Yes. By them I was called 'Ytol Dufour!'"

"H-al! Ione, do you hear? She was called 'Dufour!'"

"Just as we suspicioned, mother," observed Ione, quietly. "I think this is beginning to develop."

While they conversed, they dreamed not that there was another party to this interview. An ugly face peered in at the open window, from the thick foliage of a tree whose branches grew close to the sill. A pair of glowing, gleaming, scintillating eyes were fastened, like the orbs of a serpent, on Ytol.

"Ytol," Mrs. Layworth spoke rapidly, "we have reason to believe that we know you. Unless we are greatly mistaken, your father's name was Silas Dufour, and your mother was called Nora."

Ytol did not answer. Surprise was molded in her features, for these were the names mentioned by the masked figure who was her captor on the yacht. What could Mrs. Layworth know of her father and mother, if these were they?

"You say you never saw your mother?"

"Never, I guess; for I do not remember her."

"Perhaps if you saw her you would know."

"If I saw her?" repeated Ytol.

"Yes. What if I were to show you her picture, as she looked in your infant days?"

"Oh, Mrs. Layworth! can it be possible? Did you know my mother? Can you tell me anything of her, and who I am?"

There was a beseeching eagerness in her tone; her veins thrilled with a strangely-born hope that she might hear something to prove her identity and lift her up from the dark shadows which surrounded her origin.

"I think—ay, I am sure I knew her well."

The eyes of the speaker flashed and glittered, and bent with a piercing sternness upon the young girl.

She leaned slightly forward; one hand grasped and crushed the cloth of the table.

The look, the force of speech awed Ytol. Those black, dazzling orbs were penetrating to her soul, to read the tremors of her heart, and discern the nervous feeling which seized her.

"Mrs. Layworth, what do you know of my mother?" she gasped, with abated breath.

"I know that I hated her! I know that she robbed me of what I, at one time, held most dear on earth!—though now I half forgive it, for, the man she wedded, and whom I loved, proved to be a worthless drunkard.

The same blood that runs in her veins, runs in mine. When I married, she was the cause of my husband deserting me—my first husband, and the father of Ione; I was wedded and widowed twice. You are the child of Nora Dane. Look! Here is your mother."

She arose suddenly, and advanced to the veiled picture.

Tearing aside the crape she cried:

"See! Have you any recollection of her now?"

An indescribable sensation crept into Ytol's veins. The beautiful portrait struck a mysterious chord in her breast; her thoughts went back, back on lightning wings in an effort to conjure up the past associations that linked the likeness in her mind.

Through the relighted corridor of memory, with its countless changes, like paintings on the wall of years—back, back, till the brain paused, aching with its strain! And a dim vision of that face arose in a dream of love's sunshine, caressing her fondly, and lips whispering soft syllables in her baby ears.

It was instinct—oh, how flickering it came! yet the feeling was there, the weird and hallowed influence, the music of low lullabys that wooed to sweet repose.

She was governed by—she knew not what; mechanically she sunk from the chair to the floor, on her knees.

Her hands clasped with a quick motion; her eyes turned yearningly on the picture; one long, struggling breath, and then:

"My mother!" rung tremulously forth. "Oh, I know it must be my mother—something tells me it must be so. My heart! my heart! Mother!—dear! dear mother! is it you?"

The moaning voice was not her own; it seemed as if another being spoke. She was like one in a trance; she knelt there, oblivious to all, everything, save the half-ecstatic, half-agonizing contemplation of what she saw.

"Mother! It is she!" cried Ione, starting up. "We have found the missing heir!"

"And she is my—"

At that instant they were interrupted by a strange cry, like the short, sharp yelp of a snarling dog, followed by a crash of glass—and the long curtains at the windows were dashed in a mass from the cornice.

A figure bounded in upon the floor, a loathsome gorilla-like object, ill-shapen and frightful, and from whose mouth issued a chattering, gibbering sound.

Catdjo, the Dwarf, it was!

Mrs. Layworth shrunk, and was transfixed before the apparition; every vestige of color fled from her cheeks; like a staring corpse she stood against the wall, with one hand outstretched on the papered surface. Not alone her horror at being confronted by a human so hideous; but beneath the guise of deformity and Satanic mien, she discovered something, recognized a familiar countenance, that curdled her blood, that made her heart rise in her throat.

Ione, wildly excited and terrified, took a step forward, then halted, riveted.

Ytol, roused from the spell that held her, uttered a quick scream, then a low, deep groan, and sunk down as if stricken lifeless.

"Mother!" shrieked Ione, in a voice of fear.

"Oh, God!" gurgled from Mrs. Layworth's hucless lips. "It is he! It is he!"

"Who, mother?—who? What is it?"

But, the Dwarf heeded them not. His flaming eyes were bent upon the portrait, which was still exposed by the frozen, rigid hand that held the crape folds back.

One of his limbs was thrown to the front, and his body leaning slightly backward. His arms were raised half-way at his sides, and fists clinched; his broad chest heaved, and his breath came loud through his nostrils.

There was that in the picture which awakened a seething fire of emotion in his breast, rage, hate and madness combined—a mighty passion to vibrate every fiber of his frame.

It appeared as if he would spring at the beautiful face and tear it from its cords, to crunch it in his doubling, twisting, writhing hands.

A fearful tableau; doubly significant in aspect.

But, hark!—footsteps; pattering, shuffling, running footsteps in the hall without.

Ytol's scream had wrung and echoed to the

ears of the servants below; these, with Lord Somers at their head, were hastening to the apartment.

The Dwarf also heard. A change came over him. Quickly wheeling around, he ran to the table and extinguished the light.

Darkness.

And the dread creature present invisibly!

"Oh, Heaven!" gasped Mrs. Layworth, tottering and groping away from the wall.

"Mother! Mother! where are you?"

Ione heard a sound as if of a falling body. Then the door was burst open.

The lamp was relighted, and when its rays illuminated the apartment, Somers and the servants drew back apace in amazement and alarm.

Mrs. Layworth and Ytol were lying insensible on the floor; Ione clung to a chair for support, ghostly white, and quivering from head to foot.

But the Dwarf—the Demon Dwarf—the cause of the scene of terror—had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SURPRISING AVOWAL.

"Mysterious are His ways, whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds, that never met before,
Shall meet." —COWPER.

"I fear that love disturbs my rest,
Yet feel not love's impassioned care;
I think there's madness in my breast,
Yet cannot find that madness there." —ODES OF ANACREON.

WEEKS had gone since the night of our last chapter.

A pall of mystery shrouded Wilde Manor. No explanation was given of the singular events which transpired in the family room. Even Lord Somers was kept in the darkness of wonder relative to what he had witnessed.

Ytol was busy as usual with her duties as governess; the household management progressed quietly; but Mrs. Layworth seemed to have lost her customary vivaciousness. She was not the same brilliant woman she had been; something rested on her mind, heavy and enervating.

There was a degree of stealth and hushful bearing in the movements of the servants. Voices were low, and uneasy gossipings prevailed among them, from the hall porter down to the scullion-maid. A somber look appeared to settle everywhere, filling the dimly-lighted passageways with imaginary shadows of goblins and uncanny presences.

This, however, was relieved to a certain extent by a sly bustle, necessary to the preparation of the Lodge for occupancy—that occupant Dwilla St. Jean, as the reader has been told.

The Lodge was a small dwelling of block-stone and slanting roof, rather romantic in appearance, as it lay half-hidden in the thick foliage of vines and trees.

It had been long unused; the creepers tangled wildly against its dusty, cobwebbed walls; bushes and branches grew at random around it, and the little wire fence was bent and crooked out of all repair.

The habitation was in sight of the Manor House—one of its wee windows peeping, like an ambushed sentinel, from behind the overgrown verdure.

And Ytol's enemies had come there to watch, like a vulture soaring nigh to its prey, an opportunity to pounce upon and destroy.

All unconscious of the dread surveillance, the young governess roamed through the shady paths with Cecil and Walter, or sometimes alone. Though watchful for the appearance of the hideous Dwarf—her keen fears partially allayed—yet she dreamed not how close, how terribly close, were those whose apparent object was her destruction.

It was nigh the twilight of a beautiful day—a day that had dragged wearily for her, as the children, usually bright and apt, were singularly dull. Worn out by the severe tax, she sought the cool walk that led to the lake.

Autumn was coming on; the leaves and grasses were changing their green hues for the dye of russet, and the flowers, at their

gayest bloom, refreshed her with their breathing of a thousand luscious perfumes.

She felt the need of solitude—the want that sometimes governs us, to turn away from ordinary surroundings and seek the spell of simple rest and meditation.

Mrs. Layworth had cautioned her to say nothing of the recent occurrence; the haunting presence of the hideous Dwarf must not be mentioned.

There were unpleasant items burdening Ytol's mind; the declaration of Mrs. Layworth, concerning the past; her hatred for Nora Dufour, who, she said, was Ytol's mother. The subject had not been touched upon since that night; the strange interview remained, as yet, unexplained and mystifying to the young girl.

She was thinking and worrying, too, in a continual remembrance of the veiled portrait in Mrs. Layworth's room. Could it be, indeed, the likeness of her mother? Would Mrs. Layworth clear up for her the clouds that hovered over her unhappy past? Again—uneasy thought—if Mrs. Layworth had so hated Ytol's mother, would she transfer that hate to the child? And, last of all, *was* her name Dufour?

"Why, that is *Wharle's* name! How strange it would be if it should turn out that we are related! Dear, dear Wharle! . . . I wonder where he is now? I guess he forgot me long ago. But I shall always remember him, and pray for him, though he is lost to me forever. How I used to listen for his footstep at the hill tryst by the Chesapeake! Dreary as those days were, they were not without some blessing of sunshine and sweet hope.

Her closing murmur was but the echo of lips that speak to-day on every side. No life, how sad its past, but what, if searched in calm review, will show forth a stray gem glistening in the gray days of despair.

With all its melancholy scenes, this is a beautiful, beautiful world. Its happinesses are like the stray slants of sunbeams that come through the blinds before our window, to play and dance upon the checkered wall.

There was never a screen without two sides; there was never a life without two phases; and as those rays creep between the blinds, to cheer even the hated spider, so do bright haloes of sunshine pour from the rents in the bosom of despair's dark cloud.

Buried in reflection, Ytol walked on in the deepening twilight, wandering forgetful of the distance she had gone.

Ere she knew it, she reached the line of hedgery that bordered the lake. Here she was awakened to her surroundings by a rustle at her side.

Looking up, she saw Lord Somers lolling back in a rustic seat, with a newspaper hanging idly in his hand, and his eyes regarding her intently.

"At last!" she heard him exclaim; and then: "Good-evening, Miss Lyn."

"Lord Somers."

She bowed, and would have continued on. But he rose quickly and overtook her.

"Stay a moment, Miss Lyn!" he urged.

"What is it?" inquired Ytol, pausing shyly.

"Do you know I have been waiting for you on this very spot every afternoon for nearly four weeks?"

"Waiting for me?" in astonishment.

"Even so. You forget: the last time you were here you promised to meet me the next afternoon."

"True, I did."

"Why did you not keep your promise?"

"I do not hesitate to inform you: Mrs. Layworth requested me to avoid meeting you in the future."

"Oh, Mrs. Layworth requested it, eh?"

"Yes. So you will see, I cannot, in consistency with her expressed wishes, linger here. Permit me to pass—"

"I beg your pardon, but I *don't* 'see.' I request that you give me your society for awhile."

"I cannot. Be kind enough to consider how you are jeopardizing me. I cannot afford to lose my position at Wilde Manor."

"Do not fear. Would I have asked you to meet me alone without some special object?" The last peculiarly, while his eyes lighted.

"A special object, Lord Somers?—what can it be?"

"I'll tell you." Now, the report is out that Ione and myself are to be married. I pronounce it *false*. There is nothing seriously binding between us; therefore I am at liberty to address whom I please."

He paused.

What did Lord Somers mean? Ytol asked herself. His impressive manner was singular, his announcement surprised her greatly. But, of what importance was it to her, whether there did or did not exist a positive betrothal between the two? Why did he take pains to inform her in the negative?

"Well,"—wonderingly, "of what interest is this to me?"

"Miss Lyn, I am a man of few words. Experience has taught me to waste no time in coming to the point. As you are aware, I am wealthy, influential, free of heart. I would ask you to be Lady Somers—my wife—"

"My lord!"

Ytol gazed in utter amazement.

"Perhaps you think it levity? Not so. I have seen much of you—more than you imagine. I love you, for I have marked in you traits that other women do not possess—"

"Why, Lord Somers, my ears certainly deceive me! What are you saying? It is some extraordinary good humor on your part; you are enjoying yourself forgetfully—"

"Will you answer my proposal?"

"Answer? Your proposal? *What* do you mean, my lord?"

"Is it not plain? I have asked you to be my wife."

His tone was rather practical for a lover; yet his earnestness was plain, there was an unmistakable sincerity in his speech. Ytol, astounded by the proposition, stared like one dumbstruck.

"Answer me—"

"Cease, my lord; let me begone!" she pleaded, starting to pass him.

He laid a hand upon her arm—laid it there gently, detaining her, and gazing ardently into her incredulous, upturned face.

"Do not misunderstand me," he whispered.

"Lord Somers, you surely are jesting?—you are sporting unkindly with me!" exclaimed the bewildered girl.

"I swear to you—if I may swear—that I love and would marry you."

"Marry me? Oh! no, my lord! You would not wed with such as I am; a poor governess, a friendless girl, whom you would despise, in after years, for her past history of wretchedness. You do wrong to talk to me thus. Let me go, believing that this is some innocent joke; and I forgive it—"

"Ytol Lyn, listen to me!" he interrupted, warmly. "I offer to marry you and be your friend. If you are poor, it is in money alone, and I will make that up. Do not doubt me in this. My motives are pure; I propose to you in all the sincerity of honor. Will you accept?"

"I dare not consider it for a moment, my lord! I beg of you, let me go my way!"

Ytol now spoke frightenedly. She was greatly agitated; the abruptness, the unexpectedness of such a proposal from Lord Somers startled her.

She disengaged his light hold upon her arm, and stepped from him.

"Don't flee from me!" he besought, making a motion as if to clasp her sleeve again.

"I cannot listen to you—"

"Say you will be mine. Or—" his manner altering suddenly and wonderfully, "well, I see you are taken by surprise. It is natural. Go, then! But remember: Lord Egbert Somers has offered you his hand and heart. To-morrow morning, I'll be sure to seek you and expect your answer. Think of it, meanwhile—and think wisely. *Au revoir*. By-the-by, here's the day's paper. There may be interesting reading in it."

Mechanically, she took the paper which he handed her. Her lips were sealed; the blue eyes were wide and blank.

Raising his hat politely, he left her, smiling complacently as he turned away.

For a few seconds she stood motionless, staring after him, and then fled back along the path toward the house.

When the spot was deserted, the bushes were thrust apart, and a female stepped forth from concealment.

It was the new occupant of the Lodge—

D villa St. Jean, the woman ally of the dreaded Dwarf!

Looking after the two, alternately, she laughed, lowly:

"Ha! ha! ha! So, Lord Somers is in the web of fascination? Look to yourself, then, Ione Layworth. It is the family history of the Danes that, if a daughter be first loved by a man, and there is the smallest encouragement of passion, all the powers of earth cannot draw the affection from its idol. So it was when Silas Dufour met Nora Dane; so it was when Shensen Layworth met Nora Dane, after her marriage, and he deserted his own wife to follow her! The same blood flows, the same beauty of feature exists now as then. If Catdjo does not soon seize Ytol, and she gives Lord Somers so much as one soft glance, there will be a match that Ione Layworth will not figure in."

CHAPTER XX.

THE BROKEN BOND.

"Four things the wise man knew not to declare
The eagle's path athwart the fields of air;
The ship's deep furrow through the ocean's
spray;
The serpent's winding on the rock; the way
Of man with woman."
—HERBERT.

"But there are storms, whose lightnings ever
glare,
Tempests, whose thunders never cease to roll—
The storms of love, when maddened to despair,
The furious tempests of the jealous soul."
—CLAYTON.

Mrs. LAYWORTH sat in the parlor, reading beneath the chandelier of many brilliant fancy lamps.

She was disturbed by the abrupt entrance of Ione.

The face of the beautiful girl was crimson, her eyes flashed fiercely, her jeweled hands were clinched tightly, with the arms stiff at her sides. There were frowning lines across her erst smooth brow, and her whole mien indicated a burning frenzy.

"Well, Ione!" exclaimed the mother, "what does *this* mean?"

Ione did not reply immediately, but strode back and forth once or twice; then she halted near the oval table, half leaning on it, and swaying under the influence of passion.

"Ione, you are excited. What has occurred?"

"Oh! this is *too* much!"—breathlessly. "You thought I had nothing to fear; you advised me not to be jealous. We have both been blind, *blind*, I say, while an outrage was being practiced before our very eyes."

"Why, Ione—" Mrs. Layworth put aside the book, and contemplated her daughter bewilderedly, hesitating with her utterance.

"Mother, I say we have been outraged!"

"How?"

"By Lord Somers—by this plotting, scheming, pretty-faced governess, Ytol Lyn, or Ytol Dufour. It is bad enough that we should find the heir to the best bulk of Uncle David's estate, and be robbed eventually of so much of our wealth; but to have her intrude here, and by her sly, coy, artful enchantments, destroy all our anticipations for the future—"

"Tell me what this girl has done?" interrogated Mrs. Layworth, rising, while her own glance kindled, and a suspicion of Ione's meaning came gradually into her mind.

"Done?" panted the beauty. "She has won from Lord Somers a proposal of marriage!"

"No!"

"But she has! I heard it. They met, not two hours since, at the lake. It was accident that placed me not twenty feet from them: I was screened by the hedge, and did not lose a word of their dialogue. More: he even told her a deliberate falsehood—told her that we never had been, and were not betrothed. Oh! how I hate him now, where I but tolerated him before!"

"And Ytol?—did she accept?"

Ione was walking to and fro again, unable to remain still.

"No, she refused him!"

"Then he is not lost to you yet; and if you are wise—"

The excited girl rushed suddenly, and passed. Her upturned, and her face glowed as if the midnight light which illumined

her, redoubled by her mother's speech, sent every pulse of blood to cheeks and temples.

"Not lost!" she repeated huskily; "and do you think I would wed Lord Egbert Somers, knowing that he considers his allegiance so lightly?—knowing that he has broached the subject of love to another, while bound to me, and denying my claim upon him? Am I begging for his affection? Am I to tolerate open insult, crush the germ of feeling in my own soul, to retain him? No—I will not. It is at an end. I would not marry him now, even if, on bended knees, he—"

"Hush!" hissed the mother, sharply, and with a quick, warning sign.

Lord Somers at that moment came upon them. They had not heard his step in the hall.

Had he overheard Ione's passionate outburst?

"Good-evening!" he said, blandly—the voice of one surprised at an unexpected meeting.

Ione turned from him. How she despised him, just then! She approached one of the windows, and drawing aside the draping curtains, looked out, to conceal her emotion.

Mrs. Layworth, raised in the world's school, smiled pleasantly.

"You've kept yourself rather aloof, my lord."

"I crave pardon for it, if it is a fault. I never tire of rambling around this delightful locality—especially in the direction of the lake," with a glance at Ione, whose back was toward him.

The keen mother detected that glance; she felt that his remark was an intended thrust.

"You were reading," he added. "Do not let me interrupt you."

"Oh, it is no interruption; I was about to retire. You'll excuse me?"

Bowing and bestowing a covert look upon the silent form near the window, Mrs. Layworth withdrew.

She desired the pair to be alone together; she meant to seek Ytol.

As she ascended the stairs she muttered, pettishly:

"How unfortunate! I could curse this girl for the trouble she has made. Did Lord Somers hear Ione?—if so, he is too spirited to consummate the intended match; and thus both money and title slip through our grasp. Ione is foolish. I shall scold Ytol severely—ha! lucky thought: I'll look her up in her room, until Lord Somers returns to London. He goes in four days. She will not be particularly missed in that time."

With the new scheme running in her mind, she tiptoed in the direction of Ytol's apartment. The nursery was empty; and as the next day was the children's holiday, she knew the governess must be in her room.

But events were to transpire which would take Lord Somers away from Wilde Manor within twenty-four hours.

Mrs. Layworth's fears were correct. Somers had, though unintentionally, been a listener to Ione's jealousy.

When alone with her who was indeed his affianced bride, he calmly folded his arms and surveyed her. There was a cold, haughty expression in his handsome features; his eyes regarded her with a stern, thoughtful look.

"Miss Layworth."

It required a mighty effort, but she turned slowly round, and met his gaze with admirably simulated indifference.

"Lord Somers," she returned in a monotone of ice.

"Since you have openly expressed a repugnance for our prospective marriage—though not directly to me—perhaps you will now release me, in plain terms, from an engagement which I, also, confess to be unsatisfactory."

His impressive dignity was piquing to her.

"S—o," with sarcasm, "Lord Somers has been playing eavesdropper—"

"To the point, if you please, Miss Layworth," with a deep frown.

"Oh, I am not trying to evade, sir—"

"Shall I repeat my words?" interrupting.

Perhaps Ione cooled somewhat when she realized the true import of the situation; perhaps in the relaxation of temper before a sober view she was prepared to regret what she had said. She comprehended that he

must have heard all; he was now acting upon the basis she had given him, and she perceived that it was to be no lover's quarrel, but a breaking off, forever, of their intimate relation.

Still she was too rigidly molded in her pride, too aptly modeled after her sex, to sacrifice, or make retraction, the more so when impelled by the thought of his insult to their vows.

"Be kind enough to release me," he reiterated, after waiting some time.

"I certainly will not hold you to your obligation, my lord, if it is distasteful to you."

"I am free, then?"

"You are free."

He bent his head stiffly and said "Thank you," in a low whisper, then advancing to the table, he seated himself with careless ease, and idly fingered the leaves of the volume which Mrs. Layworth had left lying there.

Ione remained like a statue for a brief space, her eyes anon filled with a glitter as keen as dagger-blades, or softening, as her feelings vibrated between alternate rage, chagrin, or partial self-reproof. Then without a word, she swept majestically past him—paused an instant in the doorway, as if she would speak—shut her lips within biting teeth—and was gone.

His eyes, unperceived, followed her.

"Let her regret it at her leisure," he mused, half aloud. "It afforded me a fine opportunity to escape; and I am glad the shackles have fallen so easily."

Ione was in the solitude of her boudoir—not crying like a silly sweetheart, but with delicate brows contracted, stern and dark, as she thought upon the altered state of affairs, and her pink nails cutting sorely into the flesh of her hands—hands that worked nervously, as if convulsively crunching the objects of a scathing reflection.

Somers went out of the spacious parlor, and walked upon the lawn at the side—indulging his fondness for a cigar, and leisurely in the bright moonlight.

His thoughts were of the young governess.

"What love I am capable of," he argued, lowly, to himself, "is Ytol Lyn's—and yet," half pausing—"it cannot be love that I feel for this girl; it is like yielding to some fascination, which her very presence seems to weave. Her innocence of itself is charming; her simplicity is more captivating far than the smirking grace of a reigning belle; and Ione's beauty fades like a star of sickly radiance when this light is near—Hark!"

He halted suddenly. The sweet strains of music floated to his ears, seeming to come from above.

He was directly beneath Ytol's window. The young girl had an organ, a temporary gift from Mrs. Layworth, upon which she had taught herself to play. The instrument was not entirely new to her. In the silent time she was at Madame De Varney's, she had mastered the rudiments of music; and by close practice while with the Drews, at Rose Grove, and since her coming to Wilde Manor—spurred by both ambition and necessity (two motives of incalculable power, when combined with opportunity), she had accomplished much, and could play with tolerable finish.

The liquid tremor of melody, pure, yet sublime, yet simple of selection, chained him, he listened like one encompassed by a spell of witchery.

"It is she. I have heard her before," in a low breath. "Ione never could play like that."

The music changed; Ytol's voice grew soft and plaintive, following a weird, stirring accompaniment—an air that was dreamy and rich with pathos.

"She sings like an angel!" he exclaimed rapturously, while his hearing strained to the utmost.

CHAPTER XXI.

A THWARTED DEMON!

"Shall people point at thee with fingers raised?
Must thy dishonor to the world be blazed?
Must songs be chanted, and from every tongue
Where'er thou turn'st the shame be at thee sung."
—FRENCH OF MOLINAR.

Ytol's mind was swimming as she ran from the lake, from the spot where Lord Somers had made his singular proposal.

But she was not long possessed with the feeling of amazement which his words caused. It seemed to her so ridiculous, so utterly out of all reason, that he could have been in earnest—that he really meant his offer of marriage to her—that she readily forced herself to believe it a mere pleasantry on his part, though rather improper considering her position.

Ere she reached the house, she slackened her half-running pace, and was calm again.

Seeking her room at once, she lighted the lamp and seated herself to peruse the paper he had given her. At the moment she entirely banished all troublesome recollection of what had occurred.

But she had scarcely begun to look over the journal when her eyes were caught by a glaring heading of large type—one that made her start, her face pale, and her heart to beat with great throbs:

"TERRIBLE MARINE DISASTER!

"WRECK OF THE PETREL, OF THE PHILADELPHIA-LIVERPOOL LINE STEAMERS!

"GREAT LOSS OF LIFE!

"BRISTOL.—BY TELEGRAPH:—The Ariel, just in from New York, reports that off Sable Island, she encountered the wreck of the steamship Petrel, Philadelphia, Captain D. W. D'Arcy. The vessel was storm-beaten and partially destroyed by fire. The captain, four of the crew, and a cabin-passenger by the name of Jerome Foster were swept overboard and lost, in the severe gale of Tuesday night last. The Ariel rendered timely assistance to those who survived, as the Petrel was fast sinking when she came up. The whole cargo is a total loss, damaged by fire and water—nothing saved but human lives. The doomed ship went down shortly after the departure of the rescuers. * * * *

Here followed a list of the names of passengers, with a few comments on the amount of loss to particular firms.

Ytol read the account over twice, as if she doubted what she beheld. As she scanned the two names of those she knew, and who were endeared to her, they burnt upon her brain and darted a pang so keen, so deep that her bosom shrank beneath the cut.

Captain D'Arcy—so kind, so generous, the one sole refuge and protection she had remaining in the world—Jerome Foster—gentle, noble-hearted Jerome, whom she loved so dearly, and who, perhaps, was at that very time journeying away from where he thought she was that he might forget what he termed her cruelty and stony coldness of heart; both gone! Where, now, should she turn? Where, now, the strength, the hope that had buoyed her on? What bourn was open, if new trials came netting on her pathway?

The paper dropped from her nerveless fingers; she bowed her head forward on her arms, on the table, and wept.

"I am alone now—all alone!" she murmured. "Oh, God! watch over me, and let my troubles be lighter, that I may bear them without a comforter."

Her world was growing more lonely—oh! so lonely then.

"Ytol."

Mrs. Layworth was standing just inside the door; she called lowly.

Ytol looked up, and tried to hide her grief. "My dear, I have something to say," she continued in a not unpleasant voice.

"Well, Mrs. Layworth?"

"I want you to consent to being a prisoner in this room for awhile."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Ytol, in a voice of surprise and inquiry.

"Yes. Do not be alarmed; I'll explain. A very unfortunate circumstance has transpired. Did I not request you to avoid meeting Lord Somers?"

"You did, and—"

"And yet you were *tele-a-tete* with him this afternoon at the lake."

"Upon my honor, Mrs. Layworth, I was not."

"Don't tell me a falsehood, Ytol."

"You interrupt me. It is not my intention to speak falsely—my tongue has never been sullied by a lie, for Truth is my religion! My meeting with Lord Somers was

purely accidental. I had no idea of his proximity; I abbreviated our conversation to the best of my ability."

"And yet Ione—who was near you unperceived—heard him speak in a manner unbecoming his station and honor."

Ytol colored.

"I hope Miss Ione, if she was near, took notice of my bearing toward him. She will certainly bear witness that I could not have sought him, judging by his remarks."

"She is very much worried about it, and, I fear, is inclined to think that you will forget your position, and assume to consider seriously what he said to you."

The young girl's lips wreathed in a bitter smile, and the soft blue eyes lighted with an unconscious brightness as she returned the other's steadfast gaze.

"No, I will not forget my position, Mrs. Layworth. I will not forget how menial, dependent, and what an unhappy girl I am. Your daughter need entertain no fears. I have not thought for an instant to dare her disfavor!"

She arose and crossed to the window, dashing away the last lingering tear from her cheek.

"Nevertheless," pursued Mrs. Layworth, "I think it judicious that we should take measures to avoid all possibility of a repetition of the lake scene. Will you be sensible enough to do what I wish? Lord Somers will only be here four days longer, and then I will restore you your liberty. You shall be waited upon attentively, and your captivity need not be so very irksome."

"Do as you please," said Ytol, gazing out into the starry, moonlight night. "It will not be necessary to lock me in."

Mrs. Layworth withdrew after obtaining this consent, but she was not fully satisfied; she would not risk anything, and when she closed the door, she noiselessly turned the key in the lock.

In the hall she was confronted by Ione.

"It's too late, mother," with a depressive gesture.

"Too late?"

"I heard all that passed. It will avail nothing; Lord Somers and I are strangers."

"What?"

"The engagement is broken—"

"No—it must not be!" seizing her daughter by the wrist and leading her away. "You must wed him. This wound must be healed. Leave it to me."

Ytol looked hard at the retreating form, the same bitter wreathing of the lips, the self-depreciating expression settled in her pale face.

"Is it possible that there is anybody on this earth who fears *me*—poor, tortured woman that I am?"

Involuntarily she went to the door and tried the knob. It would not yield. Then she shook her head sadly. She was, indeed, a prisoner!

"After all, it makes no difference; I would be as well off if shut up in here forever."

She turned to the organ, and slowly threw open its cover. Her heavy-laden spirit wanted some such channel by which to relieve its melancholy.

The soul, when weary, finds its richest balm in music; it is the only thing that exists in heaven and earth alike.

Timidly at first she touched the keys: then the solemn chords volumed with an increasing melody, as her being swiftly centered in enthusiasm of the sound. Presently she changed the air, and her low, sweet voice—though scarcely cultured—lent a spell to the strain that engaged her every power, brightening her eyes and hueing her cheeks.

While thus absorbed, the cloud of danger was lowering nigh her.

A face appeared above the window-sill—a familiar, savage, wolfish face—the face of Catdjo, the Demon Dwarf! His eyes glared ferociously at her, as he clung to the thick vines that grew like tangled cords outside, and he seemed hesitating whether to enter.

Unconsciously she sung on. Slowly higher and higher rose the Dwarf, more dreadful and terrible gleamed his lurid orbs.

Then he had gained the floor—he stood, with his short, crooked body bent, as if gathering all his enormous strength.

Suddenly Ytol felt a pair of long, sinewy arms glide and coil around her. She beheld

the glowering visage at her side, and the blood froze in her veins. For a second, she was rigid as marble in her terror; then a wild, startled shriek rung from her lips, and she swooned in the embrace of the devilish object.

Catdjo grasped her up, and stepped hurriedly toward the window.

"Halt!" ordered a sharp, stern voice.

Lord Somers was on the sill on one knee, holding by the raised sash, and in one hand he held a leveled pistol.

The Dwarf uttered a cry that would have been a curse if he could have spoken.

"Halt, there, you scoundrel! Who in the fiend's name are you?"

Quick as lightning, Catdjo dropped his burden and sprung forward.

The pistol cracked, but the ball whistled past its mark; and, swift as the bullet, the Demon was upon the Englishman, grappling with him, and dragging him into the room.

Back and forth they swayed, beside the insensible form of the girl—straining, bending, writhing, panting; strangely matched, for Somers was an athlete, and wrestled with skill.

But, his half-human antagonist was of iron and steel; his ponderous strength and muscular grip were like the giant and vise. With one herculean movement, he dashed Somers, reeling, to one side, and in the same breath, he vanished.

The Englishman bounded in pursuit; but he only saw a small, ball-like shape speeding with the swiftness of an arrow toward the trees.

"Ytol! Ytol!" he cried, taking her head on his knee, and smoothing back the golden tresses, "are you hurt? Answer me, Ytol!"

Ytol opened her eyes, and looked up into the eager face.

Simultaneously, the door flew open. The scream, the pistol-shot, the noise of strife had been heard. Mrs. Layworth, Ione, the hall porter and several servants stared upon the tableau in amazement.

"My heyes!" blurted the porter, gaping wide.

"A delightful scandal, mother!" hissed Ione.

"Lord Somers in the bedroom of the governess!" exclaimed Mrs. Layworth, with mingled surprise and sarcasm.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

"The bar of rank was trampled down,
I stooped and raised her to my crown."

—COOK.

"Oh! the fierce sickness of the soul—to see
Love bought and sold."

—BULWER.

"Give me but thy heart, though cold;
I ask no more."

—CORNWALL.

Ytol sprung to her feet with the assistance of Lord Somers; but she shrunk before the staring eyes that looked in from the doorway.

The Englishman calmly surveyed them.

"Yes," he said, as if in answer to Mrs. Layworth's exclamation, "I am here."

"You are very considerate, my lord, to perpetrate this scandal beneath my roof," sneered Mrs. Layworth, ironically.

"All of which I can explain."

"Oh, no doubt—Begone!" the last to the servants.

"Oh, Mrs. Layworth!" cried Ytol, advancing with crimsoned cheeks, "believe me, if Lord Somers had not come to my aid when he did, I should have been killed."

"Indeed?"

And Ione echoed:

"Indeed?"

"That frightful thing, which you yourself have seen, was here in this very room. It had me helpless in its terrible arms, when Lord Somers saved me. I feel that I owe him my life. Won't you believe me?"

"A likely story. Ha! ha! ha!"

"And a true one," emphasized Somers, whose brow was dark as a thunder-cloud. "I regret, madam, that one dare not be a champion for a lady distressed, in your house, without incurring unjust suspicion. I might explain still further, in detail, to your satisfaction; but now under the circumstances I shall not."

Turning to Ytol he whispered:

"Do not fear. It is in your power to save both your name and mine. I shall leave here immediately. I give you till daybreak to make up your mind. Marry me and all will be well."

He pressed her hand; then with a firm, dignified step, he walked from the room, his gray eyes hard and sternly bent upon the mother and daughter.

Without speaking to Ytol—whose drooping, trembling form scarce stood there, with the Englishman's words dwelling in her ears—Mrs. Layworth and Ione withdrew. The door was not locked this time.

"I hope you are convinced, mother?"

"Come, my child," hurrying along the hall; "it is sufficient. But that shot?—what could it have meant?"

"A mere effort at cloaking the true character of the tableau. You say Ytol's door was locked?"

"By my own hands. You must have seen me turn the key."

"Lord Somers, then, entered by the window, for a *tele-a-tele* with his charmer. His sudden appearance frightened her—she screamed—she fainted. He heard us coming; he fired the pistol—I know he carries one—then invoked her to indorse the lie with which he would endeavor to escape being compromised. All is very plain to me."

"And to me. I would not have you wed Lord Somers, now."

In the lower entry Somers beckoned the porter to him.

"I want you to send to the city," he said, slipping a sovereign into his hand, "and get me a cab."

"Yes, m'lord."

"Have it here by daybreak—promptly. Do you understand?"

"Yes, m'lord; you shall 'ave it."

Having attended to this, he retired to his apartments, and packed his trunk. He did not lie down that night, but lighted a cigar and trod the carpet thoughtfully—apparently cool, not varying from his accustomed nonchalance of mien. Underneath the collected exterior, however, he was angered and worried.

With the first gray of dawn he descended to the parlor. The cab was just coming in at the gate, and he noticed it with satisfaction.

Touching the bell he requested a servant to inform Miss Lyn that he desired to see her in the parlor.

After a short absence, the messenger returned with:

"She'll be down in a minute, m' lord."

A feeling of pleasure thrilled him. The fact of her assenting reply promised well for his hopes.

When the young girl entered he was surprised at the change that was visible in her. The blue eyes were bright, the cheeks were rosy, there was a resolute expression in the sweet face, and her voice, when she spoke, was strangely firm.

"You see," she said, with a gesture, "I obey."

"And it tells me that you have decided in my favor."

"Upon conditions—yes."

"Name them."

"Do you assure me that there is nothing binding between you and Ione Layworth?"

"I do. We are as strangers."

"Another thing: are you willing to take me, knowing what I am, and not who I am?—without my being able to indicate who were my parents—ah! you start."

"Go on—say it all."

"With the possibility of my being the offspring of some miserable pair, whose record may be stained with crime, the revival of which would make you blush."

"Impossible! This cannot be—"

"I have not asserted that it is so—yet it is possible, for I know not otherwise."

"I had not dreamed such a thing—"

"You had no cause. You see, now, my lord, you have done too much in blindness. As I told you at the lake, you would not wed with such as I am."

Ytol was talking plainly, severely. She seemed altered completely; something, some powerful influence was working within her as she put the tests.

"You are mistaken," he interrupted, quickly, stepping to her side; "I love you. I

want to possess you. Tell me, am I to have you?"

"You have weighed this well?"

"Yes—all."

Only for a second did she hesitate.

"Then I accept. Here is my token."

She extended her hand; he clasped it—he drew her to him, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips. But, there was no responsive pressure there; the embrace was cold and formal.

"The cab is at the door, Ytol; make haste."

"My trunk is ready; I packed it last night. I intended leaving Wilde Manor whether with you or not. The sooner we are off the better."

Somers half-paused. It was so utterly unlike her previous manner toward him, yet so markedly strained, that he could not fail to notice it. But he had won her. For the present he was satisfied.

The trunks were brought down and strapped onto the waiting vehicle; soon they were ready.

"Where is Mrs. Layworth?" he asked of the sleepy porter, who was just getting lazily to his post.

"She 'asn't come down yet, m' lord."

"Then I will not be able to see her. Inform her that I am gone."

They entered the cab and were driven rapidly away; and the porter, thoroughly awakened now, stared gapingly after them.

"What's up, I say?—m' Lord Somers an' t' governess a-goin' away—with their baggage. What's intil't, now, I wonder?"

Ytol gave one glance back at the fading house; whispered an adieu to Wilde Manor; when her soul grew rigid with the mask it wore.

Did she realize what she was doing? There was not one particle of affection in her heart for the man she was about to marry. Her action was the impulse of despair, her spur the stern force of a dire necessity.

We see it every day around us; lonely ones accepting the seeming possibility of relief from woe, which marriage holds out to them—to find, alas, that it is but a phantom, which only leads the aching spirit to a deeper gloom, and wraps the mantle of a double misery round the shattered being.

As they rattled over the road, another cab passed them, going toward the Manor. In it were two men.

And there were others riding swiftly for Liverpool in the first glow of the morning. The second cab had hardly passed in through the gate when a man and woman on horseback came thundering by.

Dwila St. Jean and the Dwarf!

They were in hot pursuit!

The departure of Somers and Ytol had not been unnoticed. Ione, standing at her bedroom window, saw the conveyance drive off. She ground her white teeth in rage, and a fierce exclamation burst from her lips.

With starting, straining eyes, she watched after them, and her bosom heaved in a tumult of emotion.

Mrs. Layworth was apprised of visitors in the parlor as soon as she descended the stairs.

She saw there two strangers.

Paul Faerot and Hoyle Yarik!

"Good-morning, madam!" spoke the first. "We are here on important business. Hope we did not disturb you?"

"Oh, no; what is it?"

"We are in search of a young girl named Ytol Lyn."

She started, but it was not perceptible. Faerot went on:

"Her true name is Dufour, and she is greatly interested in the will of the late David Dane, an American, who was a diamond merchant in London. We were on her track in the United States, and traced her to Cape May. At that point she was abducted by enemies. We got information of it, and pursued them in a yacht. A storm came up, destroying the craft we were in chase of; and the next day we saved one of the crew, whose name was Wharle Dufour, and who is a cousin of the girl we are in search of. We ascertained that Ytol was picked up by a steamer bound for Liverpool, and finally followed the clue to the Queen's hotel—"

"Quite a romance!" broke in Mrs. Layworth, with affected interest.

"Yes. From the Queen's Hotel we re-

ceived information that led us to suspect that you knew—"

"That I knew!"

"Where she was. Or, probably, she is now in your house?"

"I am sorry you have had your hunt for nothing," she quietly replied. "Ytol—as you call her—is not here."

Faerot looked blank.

"Blast my teeth!" mumbled Yarik.

"But she *been* here, madam?"

"Yes—and left this morning."

"Can you tell us the probable directions she took?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

Mrs. Layworth could not, or would not give them any hint as to Ytol's course, and they departed at once.

When the disappointed Faerot sunk despondingly back amid the cushions of the cab and ordered the driver back to Liverpool, Yarik pulled his sleeve and glanced, with a grin, into his face.

"What is it, Yarik?"

"Do you know *who* you've been a talkin' to?" he asked, queerly.

"No—who?"

"Why, that 'ere's Ytol's own true aunt."

"The deuce!"

"Fact. An' I can tell you somethin' about this here affair 'at you don't know yet."

"What is it?"

"Well, it's somewhat of a hist'ry."

"Let's have it. We've time before we reach the city."

"I'll jest kinder give you a s'nopsis, as they say on the play bills."

And Hoyle Yarik's face assumed a mysterious look as he bit off a fresh chew of tobacco from his enormous plug.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IT IS DONE.

"My very soul seems moldering in my bosom."
—BYRON.

"And cling, in blank despair, from breath to breath,
To naught in life * * *

—MONTGOMERY.

"Take heed! we are passionate; our milk of love
Doth turn to wormwood, and that's bitter
drinking."
—MILMAN.

It was a quiet wedding.

The hotel parlors were closed to all save a few special friends of Lord Somers, whom he notified immediately upon his arrival in London, with Ytol.

At Ytol's request, they were not married in church, and the Englishman did not consider his own bachelor residence of sufficient elegance in which to display his bride.

Hence a series of orders to his valet, to prepare the dwelling ere their return from a brief tour on the Continent.

The occasion, withal the number present was limited, was brilliant and impressive.

The room was ablaze with tapers and gas-jets; festooned and wreathed with flowers breathing delicious perfume; the carpets covered with white—a picture solemnly beautiful.

Hasty as were the arrangements, Ytol had found time to prepare an elaborate toilet, by the dextrous aid of dressmakers and waiting-maids; and a buzz of admiration went round when she threw back the profusion of veil, discovering a pale but angelic face.

She looked far older than her years—half wrought by the scenes of her unhappiness; some thought that she appeared a little sad, that the deep blue eyes mingled a perceptible weariness in their radiance.

But, her voice was calm and full of sweetness, when she uttered the vows of the ceremony, and her cheeks were gradually suffused with color.

Her simulation was perfect. None could detect the mighty effort called up to sustain her in this act so foreign to her desires.

It was over. Congratulations showered on them, and the minister addressed them in a kind charge to those who had embarked in so riskful a companionship.

In the adjoining room a bounteous table was spread. Lord Somers, at the sight of his wife, presented her with a golden cup of wine, to give the first toast.

Slowly she raised the chalice; for a second

her eyes roamed over the expectant company. Then, in a tone that was slightly tremulous:

"Let us drink to those hollow hearts that know no love!"

Her manner was so earnest—with a tincture of bitterness that could not be concealed—that a silence followed the singular speech.

Somers gazed hard at her, as if trying to reach her thoughts. But he was baffled. Not a muscle twitched upon the lovely face, not a sign to betray the true or passing import of her words.

Ytol tasted the sparkling wine, and quietly set the cup upon the cloth, without observing his scrutiny.

There were a few pleasant remarks and bursts of merriment; but Ytol's bearing, from the moment of the cementing of the bonds, had dampened the prospective ardor.

Within two hours they were whirling toward the depot.

"Was that a health to your own heart, Lady Somers?" inquired her husband, in the gloom of the carriage.

"An unfair question, my lord. I am your wife, and I shall do my duty."

"I would like to know if our future is to be as freezing as this first hour?" he put, short and pointed, influenced by her coldness.

But, Ytol only answered:

"I shall do my *whole* duty with the help of Heaven."

Just one month of wedded life.

What an irksome honeymoon to Ytol!

True, she did not falter in the great obligation which she had taken upon herself; but there were none of those fond caresses, hours of day-dreaming together, and happy mutualities of pleasure, which mark the first few weeks with peculiar joys and poised affection in the cases of happy marriages.

She was meekly submissive, and, with her little knowledge of the necessity, strove hard to please him.

But Somers soon perceived that he was bound to a bosom of ice, whose heart gave no return for all his attentions, save the spiritless thanks of lips that spoke forcedly.

They were coming home now, after a tour which, for others, might have been one of rare enjoyment. And in his soul, he was gloomy to moroseness.

It was, truly, a lovely home; near the outskirts of the city—half-castle, half-retreat; partially surrounded by spacious floral grounds, exquisite, all infused with a museful glamour, rich and perfect. A sort of double house—or two houses built as one.

And the adjoining residence had been occupied only lately—of which and whom we shall speak hereafter.

A bright day had dawned for the advent of the couple, my lord's valet had arranged everything gayly for their reception.

Two of the servants were at the gate to the broad avenue, on the look-out. Soon a little cloud of dust; then the carriage came rolling in, the gaudy equipage glistening in the sunbeams.

"And who's the bride m' Lord Somers 'as got, Mr. Joseph?" interrogated one as he put on his hat, after waving it, and gazed after the comers.

"Why, nobody knows that. 'Is lordship got 'er nigh Liverpool, de 'e see, and they say it was a rise for to make a lady of 'er."

"And they tells me she's a *h*American, Mr. Joseph."

"That's so, too—don't 'e see, Mr. William, 'e used to live along 'ith the folks at Wilde Manor, by Liverpool, 'an 'e 'as that she's a governess up there."

"But, I say, how solemnolly she looks, Mr. Joseph."

"She does that, too."

The arrival of Lord and Lady Somers was to be the occasion of a brilliant reception—so the Englishman had instructed his valet, by letter, while away.

To please Ytol, it was to be a grand masque, and select invitations were already out.

By nine o'clock the broad salons were thronged with guests, and music, discoursing in a merry strain, filled the house and grounds with delicious murmurs.

The trees were hung grotesquely with col-

ored lanterns, shedding a weird light over the fragrant walks; and couples in dominoes and masks were promenading or dancing ere the call to banquet.

"Lady Somers, where are you going?"

A figure in pink domino and scarlet mask arrested her as she was stepping out from the festive gathering.

"To walk in the garden. I am tired of this scene—for awhile, at least."

"But they are calling for the 'Evening Star' at the organ. You have won countless laurels to-night, and not one guesses right who it is. Won't you return and play?"

"Do be merciful, my lord. Let me escape, if it be but for ten short minutes. I tell you, I am wearied to death."

She passed on, out at the long window, round the piazza, and slowly took her way along one of the darker paths, removing the heated mask from her face, and gasping at the fresh, welcome air.

She did, indeed, wish to flee from the garish whirlpool that surrounded her. It was a scene in which she had no heart, to which her spirit was a sacrifice, and only felt more weightily the trying position she occupied.

Suddenly she started, and paused short. A form sprung out from behind a tree directly in front of her. It wore no disguise, it approached her with quick strides.

"Ytol!" called a well-remembered voice.

In an instant this figure was by her. For a second she stared incredulously.

"Ytol! have you forgotten me?"

"Wharle! Wharle Dufour!" she cried, huskily.

"Yes!—yes! it is Wharle. Oh, Ytol! what have you done?"

She was swaying dizzily—she was falling. A sense of weakness, helplessness—combined with such an agony as she had never felt before—came over her.

She staggered a step, and was sinking to the earth, when his arms outstretched and caught her.

Ytol had hardly left the parlors when a female, in the character of "Eve," plucked Lord Somers by the sleeve.

"My lord!"

"Eh? 'Pon my soul you are mistaken—"

"Sh! It is no time for fooleries. Come with me; I have a sight for your eyes—one that will tell its own tale."

"What mean you?" he asked, throwing off the disguise of his voice.

"It is a love scene, in which your wife figures—"

"Woman!—"

"Nay, see for yourself. Come—come."

Obeys an impulse, he followed her.

Out into the garden of glimmering lights, rustling over the grass, beneath the trees; then they halted.

"See there!" whispered his companion, with her lips close to his ear.

Somers clinched his fists and breathed a terrible curse. For he saw the "Evening Star"—his wife—in the arms of a stranger.

He would have dashed forward to throttle this intruder; but he was held back.

"Stay! It is better to wait."

"Wait! when I am being thus outraged?"

"Yes—wait; and punish her."

It was a hard struggle with the fierce element of rage; then, drawing a deep, choking breath, he watched and waited.

"Tell me who you are?" he hissed, turning to where the mask had stood.

But the informer had vanished.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST LIE.

"Farewell! thou hast trampled love's faith in the dust.

Thou hast torn from my bosom its hope and its trust!"

—HOFFMAN.

"I think my wife be honest, and think she is not; I'll have some proof."

—SHAKESPEARE.

Ytol clung, fainting, round the neck of Wharle Dufour. But his voice aroused her.

"Ytol! look up, darling."

"Wharle! Wharle! Oh, Wharle Dufour, why did you come here?" she cried, hysterically.

"Why?" he repeated, in a bitter tone. "It was because I wished to see you, Ytol, to see if you were happy in playing the unlovely

part—giving your lips to a haughty Englishman, and receiving his embraces. a man who would scorn you if he knew of your past—"

"Stop. Wharle! oh, stop! Happy?—I am miserable! Do not add daggers to my already intolerable existence. How did you find me?"

"Could earth hold you and hide you from me?" he exclaimed, drawing her, convulsively, tighter to him. "Do you remember our gay bower by the Chesapeake?"

"Yes," she answered, tremulously, as her head sunk low upon his breast.

"Do you remember how we loved each other?—the vow I registered?"

"I do, Wharle—I do," and her lips were quivering.

"I have been true to that vow, Ytol; I lived only for you. But you were *so* unkind! When you ran away, my world grew at once desolate and empty. I had nothing to live for, without you. I turned my back on my home, and started to search for you. Heaven threw us together at a strange time. I had no money, nor work, and I joined a yacht's crew at Cape May. One night we were hired to aid in an abduction. It was my intention to save their victim; and I little thought that the one so helpless in their clutches was yourself. When we held to the spar on the tossing waves the lightning showed me who it was. Have you forgotten how we met, amid the storm, and how I was swept from you? I was mercifully preserved, and I have hunted you to this place—to find you the wife of another! Oh, Ytol! how *could* you treat me so? You never loved me—never."

Ytol was sobbing painfully. His speech burnt, in its sad accents of reproof, like irons of fire into her heart.

"Wharle!" she gasped, as though her spirit were utterly crushed, "I know you must despise me; and I deserve it. I am only fit to die now; there is nothing for me but the grave. I wish I *could* have died, rather than see you! I married to escape a living death, and I married *him* because there was no other—"

"No other!"

"Wharle!—oh, Wharle! look at me: pity me just a little! Don't spurn me as the false and worthless thing I would seem to be. I have never forgotten you, Wharle. God knows how lonely I have been without you. I had to do so, I had to fly from where you were, for—for—we could not marry."

"Ytol!"

And then she told him of her conversation with his father, told him the cause of her desertion of the Lyn farm.

He listened calmly; but a hard, cold smile twitched his mouth.

"Perhaps you think you did it for the best. But see, had you waited a little longer, all would have been well. Father is dead, Ytol."

"Dead!"

"He died of apoplexy three or four days after I left the farm. Mother advertised for me, and I wrote to her, to assure her of my safety, and that I would return when I had found you. She forwarded money to me, to aid my search. I am going back now; but my life is hollow. The world is a living tomb to me. And yet I say: God bless you, Ytol—God bless you; and may you find the joy I cannot on this earth—"

Ytol suddenly started from his embrace, and strained her eyes through the gloom.

"Wharle—oh, Heaven! we have been watched."

"By whom?" quickly.

"By Lord Somers—by my husband! See: that is his form moving there. Look!"

They saw a shadowy figure skulking away among the trees; and Ytol knew well who it was.

"Fly, Wharle! I must be gone. But," the voice was low and husky, "don't go until we meet again! I must see you once more—I *must*!"

"When and where?"

"On this spot, three nights hence. Farewell."

She tore herself from him as she rapidly uttered the words, and sped swiftly toward the house.

New fears pricked her bosom. She knew that Somers had witnessed her meeting with Wharle Dufour. He would stamp it as a crime. What would be the consequences?

Could she bear his anger when he charged her with what, to him, was unmistakable guilt? How was she to meet the ordeal coming?

The guests had adjourned to the banquet hall, where all were to unmask prior to partaking of the bounteous feast there spread before them.

At the head of the table stood the pink domino, and Eve stood by its side. Far down, near the foot was the "Evening Star." For, instead of Lady Somers, it was Finette, the waiting maid!

Lady Somers was close on his left hand, and wore a blue domino.

The maid glanced at her mistress, as if appealingly; and Ytol said:

"Forgive her, my lord. She yearned to partake in the merriment, so I changed robes with her immediately after the last time I was at the organ."

While he was silent in bewilderment, and the magnetism of attraction centered round Lady Somers, the maid slipped out.

Dwilla St. Jean was perplexed. She had either thrown the husband on a wrong scent, or Ytol had defeated her by some artifice.

Ytol excused herself ere the feasting ended, pleading severe headache.

In her apartment, with Finette near, she sunk into a chair, and buried the pale, sorrowful face in her hands.

"Madame has had a narrow escape," whispered the maid, as she busied herself with disrobing her mistress.

"Oh, Finette! but, he must know it was me he saw, and he will suspicion at once that we changed after I came in. Besides, I have acted and told a lie!"

"Then madame must fib plentiful with her tongue. He must never learn how Finette aided her mistress. He must be told that it was Finette's lover, and Finette who went into the garden."

"But, girl, such falsehoods—"

"It is nothing, madame. That is the way a great many do. Ah! Finette has saved a mistress twice before she came to serve you—and, *c'est*! it was worse than this. Tell him what I say, and Finette will stand by you with so many tears that he will believe. Ha! ha! ha! Madame is young yet; but she will soon learn all the little plots."

A terrible feeling was eating at her heart-strings. Was this to be her life? Was this the relief from other trials which she sought in wedding Lord Somers? Even the maid believed her a criminal, and offered to aid her in averting discovery. She must begin with falsehoods to escape her husband's wrath and to save her outward honor.

"Hark, Finette! what is that?"

It was a singular sound to which they listened, seeming to come from the walls.

Click! tink! Click! tink! Click! tink! like the rattle and tap of a small hammer on iron and anvil.

"I cannot say," replied Finette; "we have heard it a long time before madame comes back. The new people in the next house, they pound that way every night till I am weary. What it can be, we give up. The beautiful girl who you saw stand by my lord to-night—she with the great eyes that flash—she lives there," pointing toward the wall between the two houses.

Finette meant Dwilla St. Jean.

Click! Click!—tink-a-tink! Click! tink! continued the sound at intervals—such a sound as issues from a blacksmith's shop when the work is on the anvil beneath the dancing hammer.

When Ytol lay upon her couch, she still heard it, rising faintly anon:

Click! tink! Click-a-tink-tink!

And in her sleep the mysterious hammering disturbed her causing her to move restlessly.

It was almost daylight ere Lord Somers sought the room.

Before retiring, he tood at the bedside, with folded arms and knit brows, gazing down on the fair form of the slumberer.

Surely, there was no stamp of guilt upon that brow of snow?

Yet his eyes bent frowningly on the white, beautiful face.

"Shall I believe it," he muttered, "or was I indeed deceived in what I saw? Could it have been Finette in the garden?—or was the change of masks but a trick to delude? By the Eternal!—if I was but sure that guilt

lived in that icy bosom, I'd strangle her in her dreams!—she should never see the day dawn!"

He remained there, like a statue, for many minutes. Once he thought the unconscious lips were whispering; he leaned quickly to catch the breath, with all the eagerness of a jealous ear.

But Ytol slept peacefully on, nor dreamed of the lowering figure at the drawn curtains.

CHAPTER XXV.

A MAN'S SCORN.

"I do mistrust thee, woman! and each word
Of thine stamps truth on all suspicion heard."
—BYRON.

"Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
Makes the night morning, and the noontide
night."
—SHAKESPEARE.

To add to Ytol's uneasiness, she perceived a change in her husband's demeanor. Instead of continuing his efforts to draw from her some evidence of a gradual affection, he now became taciturn, distant, formal—meeting and parting with her, on all occasions, after a most frigid style.

The falsehood had been uttered reluctantly. It was Finette who went out into the garden, and whom he saw receiving the caress of a stranger. And the maid, simulating much woe of spirits, had indorsed her mistress with ardor.

Ytol was compelled to affect a feeling of injured honor, necessary to strengthen her unnatural part. Ere the first day elapsed, she despised herself for her duplicity.

It was now too late to retract; to explain the truth might make matters worse—so she argued, in her dispirited condition, as more than one guilty heart does, and will yet argue, in the tangled circumstances of life behind the curtain.

Involuntarily, under the persuasive guidance of the scheming little maid, she found herself in the meshes of untruth, treading the dangerous path that more than one woman has trod in this too real world of ours.

But, she would see Wharle for the last time; she would not remain with him long—and then they would part forever.

"Oh, Finette!" she moaned, when they were alone together on the second night following the party, "I am so unhappy."

"Ah! madam should not let herself be worried. She must be gay. It is so nice to be married."

"Yes, where we wed with one we love."

"My lord may not live for all time," hinted Finette, with an arch smile.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, he may die—madam knows people will die some time. You will then have money plenty, and will marry again—this time, the lover of your choice."

"It is bad enough as it is," mused Ytol, "yet I have an engagement in the garden for to-morrow night."

"Be careful, be careful," she said, warningly; "madame must not go there too often. He may spy. Then we are lost, maybe."

"What—what shall I do?"

"Madame will certainly keep her engagement, this time; but he must be patient in the future. Do not disappoint him. Would madame keep the handsome young lover waiting, and not go? Ah! how cruel to think of it. He would not sleep without the sweet kisses. Finette will watch the husband while the wife enjoys herself. "Ha! ha! ha! Oh, it is very common, madame. If he find out, they will fight. And if the lover is brave, he shoot the husband in a duel—it is all fair—and you be free—"

"Finette!—I am not the wretch you think me—"

"Oh, no; madame is oppressed. Her husband he is cruel, and she go only for comfort in the garden. Finette knows; she feels for madame who is so unhappy."

The maid lapped her arms across her bosom as she spoke, and seemed ready to weep for sympathy.

Ytol turned from her with a shudder. Suddenly she called Finette to her by the window.

"See: who is that with Lord Somers?"

"It is the beautiful woman who live in the next house—where we hear the tink! tink! tink! every night. She come there some

time before madame return with her husband from the journey."

It was Dwilla St. Jean. She and Somers were in an open carriage, just entering at the gateway. They had evidently been out for a pleasure ride.

"My lord's valet, he invite her to the *bal masque*, and so they become acquainted. Last night they have a box at the theater; to-day he ride with her—and so, and so. If he do this, it is no harm for madame to play the same game."

"I must see him," murmured Ytol, inaudibly, as she watched the carriage whirl up and around the smooth drive. "He has scarce spoken a word to me in two whole days. Surely, he cannot be aware that I am deceiving him? Then what is the cause? I miss even his attentions, though I know I give him poor thanks for what he does."

There was a rap at the door, and Finette hastened to answer.

"Lady Somers is wanted in the parlor," informed a servant.

"She will be there this minute," returned the maid; and, when the door was closed: "Remember, madame, you are hurt; you are angry. He insult you. Grant him nothing till he apologize. It will come soon; he make it up."

As Ytol entered the parlor she met this Dwilla St. Jean. The latter was near the door, about to depart.

"Let me accompany you, since you must go—" he was saying; and she:

"No—it is but a step. Do not trouble yourself; I—"

Ytol's appearance interrupted.

"My wife," introduced Somers, coldly; "this is our neighbor, Miss St. Jean."

Dwilla bowed and smiled graciously on the young wife, though there was a latent gleam in her brilliant brown eyes. Then, waving an adieu she was gone.

"You sent for me, my lord."

"Because you would not have come otherwise. I am only half-satisfied about that affair in the garden. A fellow has been noticed skulking around the grounds. I had Finette's lover sent for—fortunately one of my servants knew him—and he assured me that he had not been near the premises in two weeks."

"You do well to take me to task, when you seek the society of other women in preference to mine."

"For the reason that she is full of fire and vigor; not like you—a walking iceberg. I am sick of your behavior, and tired of wasting my attentions. Moreover, I have had the pleasure of listening to your life-story."

"Indeed? Probably you found it interesting?"

"Highly so. If I had known it before, you would not now be Lady Somers—I confess it freely."

"That is a generous cut, my lord."

"If you were bold enough to conceal such a thing from me, you would not hesitate to deceive me in other instances. Miss St. Jean has given me a complete sketch of you, beginning with the reputation you bore at the Lyn Farm in America—ah! you start."

Ytol marveled that she had at all retained her composure. Even had she been more of a woman than she was, the severity of this ordeal might have crushed her.

She did not pause to ask herself how Miss St. Jean could have learned anything concerning her; she only felt the haughty, sneering tone of the husband who stood there frowning and tearing her poor bosom with taunting speeches.

Still she did not sink—a welcome power held her statue-like; her voice did not desert her, though it was faint and wavering.

"Did I not warn you, my lord? Did I not caution you of this in the parlor at Wilde Manor? Am I to blame for your error when you accepted the risks?"

"True, you *slyly* hinted at these facts; but, if you will also remember, you said it was not entirely possible. An artifice to win me—nothing else. For your reserve since our marriage, I think I have an explanation. It is that, all along you have had a lover, whose caresses were dearer than mine—"

"Egbert! Egbert!" she cried, sinking to her knees before him, "as God is my judge, I have been faithful to my vows! I know I have not shown an affection for you—I know it, but it was not because I was false—it was

because I could not be so great a hypocrite. Oh! I have tried so hard to do my duty. You wrong me by your unholy suspicion—indeed you do. Believe me—for the sake of my poor, breaking heart, believe me!”

Down to the clasped hands drooped the fair head. But his gaze was one of scorn, and his ears were deaf to her loud sobs.

Jealousy ruled the man, a passion that, in some bosoms, knows no palliation, but yields all to the picture of imagined perfidy.

“Admirably acted, Lady Somers.”

“It is not acting!” wailed the sorrowful lips, and the tearful blue eyes looked up, full of pleading. “But, I have something to tell you. Won’t you listen to me? I can explain everything; I will make it clear to you that I have done no wrong.”

The secret was gnawing unbearably. She would no longer withhold the truth, nor go further in the treacherous labyrinth Finette had woven. He should know all.

“Listen to me, Egbert! I am sure you will not judge me unkindly. You’ll be merciful; you’ll sympathize with me, when you know what I am enduring. Oh! Egbert! I am nothing but a girl—pity me—listen to me—I can not bear this!”

On her knees she had gained his side; her hands crept up to his, and grasped them with a burning, beseeching pressure.

But, he interrupted her.

“I ask no explanation, Lady Somers. I have it in your actions and words this moment. You are guilty—!”

“No! No! I am not guilty—!”

He cast her rudely from him and strode away.

And Ytol lay like one dead, upon the carpet.

Then there was a quick, stealthy footstep.

“Madame, rise up! Quick! the servants must not see. Come, madame.”

Finette was bending over her.

The unhappy girl arose with a sudden strength, and tottered dizzily for a second.

“Finette will help you to your room, madame—!”

“Stand back!” she ordered, waving the maid from her.

Her eyes shone strangely, and the colorless lips were shut till the line of the mouth was deepened. With a firm, heavy tread, she walked from the room.

In the entry she encountered Lord Somers, who was going out.

The shining eyes fastened on him, and she said, in a voice that was hollowly harsh:

“Your remedy, my lord, is in a divorce. You had best procure it, speedily as possible.”

He bowed agreement, and she passed on up the staircase, followed by his hard, cold gaze.

“Finette, to-morrow you will pack my trunks. Advise me when Lord Somers is out of the way, and see to it, for me, that there is a wagon ready to take them to the Liverpool depot.”

“Is madame going away?”

“Yes.”

“Forever?”

“Forever!” hissed Ytol, desperately.

“But, madame’s lover?—the engagement to-morrow night?”

“I will see him before I follow my trunks.”

“Ah!” thought Finette, “how romantic. While my lord he sue for divorce, she elopes with her lover! It is grand!” and her little black eyes twinkled with wicked delight at the prospect.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT HOYLE YARIK KNEW.

“Ah! that is the mystery of this wonderful history.”

—SOUTHEY.

“Revenge

Hath ears more deaf than adders to the voice Of any true decision.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

We return to Hoyle Yarik and Paul Faerot on the road from Wilde Manor to Liverpool.

Faerot was eager to hear, and the other willing to tell, something relative to the Dunes, and it is only through Yarik—who held the key—that we can acquaint the reader with the essential plot of our story.

“We both on us knew,” the convict began, “that David Dane was a diamond merchant in London—my place.”

“Yes.”

“Well, this ’ere David Dane had a rival in the business, who was Gerald Dufour. Gerald had a brother, named Silas. Silas was a sort of a good chap, but the two never were on good terms sence they was boys. They had a all-fired quarrel at one time, an’, to spite his brother, he left the ’establishment an’ went over to Dane, carryin’ right smart of trade, too.

“David Dane had three daughters. One of em—the oldest—she died. An’ Nora, the youngest, she was loved by Silas—she lovin’ him in return. When Gerald Dufour heard of it, he interviewed his brother, an’ first begged him not to marry her, an’ swore like thunder ’bout it. But, sho! what was the use? Besides, there was a fatality about that ’ere family: when one of the girls loved an’ was loved, nothin’ could separate ’em. David, he was kinder wrathful, too, ’at his child should love the brother of his rival.

“But the two got married an’ cleared out. Now—mind—Silas was loved by the other daughter, too! She was so riled-like at the match she didn’t know what to do ’ith ’erself, so she went straight off an’ married a man named Shensen Layworth. This daughter’s name was Ytol Dane! Purty soon after the last marriage, Shensen met Nora Dufour, an’ notwithstanding he was married ’imself, he just fell dead in love ’ith ’er. He got to follelin’ round after her, just like a ghost, wherever she went. An’ she bein’ kinder timid, she didn’t say anything to Silas, ’cause she didn’t want trouble, you see.

“This went on fur some time. Silas an’ Nora lived by ’emselves. For Gerald Dufour disowned him, an’ Nora’s father wouldn’t have nothin’ to do with her. Gerald busted in business an’ went to America. Silas an’ his wife went to America. They had a child, and they made the trip when this child was about two years old.

“Shensen Layworth, crazy after Nora, folleled ’em up in the same ship. I was a sailor on board—just booked—an’ I witnessed what happened. Nora was kinder tired of Shensen’s dodgin’ round, so she up an’ told her husband ’bout it. He never was a fiery chap, but he got rippin’ mad, you bet. He peeled an’ went for Layworth like a devil-shark, an’ they just had a kind of a six-show circus on the fore-castle. I was leanin’ against the capstan an’ see the whole performance. Silas drove a bullet through his cheek and cut his tongue out by the operation; then he nigh broke ’im in half with a spike! an’ broke up his constitution gen’rally. I never see a man get such a condemned mawlin’ sence I was born. If it hadn’t ’a’ been fur the second mate, Shensen would ’a’ sunk, hull fu’st. As ’twas—well, you’ve seen that ’ere Dwarf ’at purty nigh put out your light in Bud Villal! That’s Shensen Layworth. I think he must ’a’ gone lunatic after that almighty hammerin’. A ugly night, too—blast my teeth if it weren’t; a stormin’, an’ blowin’, an’ Nora, she was on deck, a carryin’ the little ’un in her arms.

“Old David kinder soothed down like when Nora went away, and he took a notion to hunt after her—which was the unluckiest thing for ’is health ’at he ever did. He sold out; made ’is will, an’ took passage fur America, which, I oughter told you, was his native country. Poor old man!—he was murdered in the State of Tennessee—”

“Yes, I know that,” broke in Faerot.

“But, do you know who it was ’at killed him?”

“No.”

“It was a feller named Jeremy Coddle—the same rat that kept the tavern in Bud Villa. Blast his teeth! Je-re-my wanted the valuables ’at David carried, an’ he got ’em. Well, I give up seafarin’ an’ went to Bud Villa. I had seen Je-re-my kill his man, an’ I made him pay considerable on that account.

“As fate had it, Gerald Dufour an’ his wife an’ child were on a farm on one side of the village, an’ Silas an’ his wife an’ child were on t’other. The brothers of ’em met, but they scowled at each other like smarl’n’ purps, an’ it wasn’t never specked ’at they was brothers, even by likeness of names. Silas got into bad company, somehow, and became a hard drinker. One night he was found dead on the road. He had a big welt from a stick on his head, an’ it was plain ’at he had been murdered.

“There wasn’t no clue to the assassin; but

I kinder thought it must ’a’ been Gerald Dufour, though I can’t say for certain. I met ’im, an’ sly like, hinted ’bout the murder. He turned pale some, but that was all.

“I was a rough-lookin’ customer, an’ I hadn’t known this ’ere Gerald Dufour long before he engaged me to do a job. It was to remove Nora Dufour from the world! He went at it in just the cutest kind of a way—Nora was taken sick with consumption, an’ the death of Silas had left her penniless. She left her babe at Farmer Lyn’s house, an’ started back fur England. I was on ’er track. She went on the very same ship ’at brought ’er over, an’ it was the very old ship I’d worked on before—the Gypsy Queen.

“Well, the plan was fur me to pitch ’er overboard. But, blast my teeth if I ever did it! Providence saved me from that crime; I’m innercent. Though I’ve suffered ’bout the same fur it. She was washed from deck in a storm ’at came up soon after we left port. I was ’ithin three feet of ’er at the time. Cuss ’er! she hadn’t no business there in the storm. The cap’n was a sp’icious sort of a tiger, an’ I was locked up on charge of havin’ drowned ’er—went to learnin’ shoe-makin’ in prison! I got off, an’ scooted back to Bud Villa, where Je-re-my ’d opened a liquor ranch. I layed low there fur some time, when, blast my teeth! the detec’s pounced onto me again. So into jail I went, an’ spent more years a’ shoemakin’. Then I landed at the old place, an’ met you. This Mrs. Layworth, at Wilde Manor, where we’ve just been, is Ytol Dane, an’ the aunt of our Ytol, who was named, sing’lar enough, by Herbert Lyn, by accident, after ’er mother’s sister. This ’ere Dwarf, ’at’s boundin’ after the gal, is Shensen, the husband of Mrs. Layworth. She thought he’d died at sea—she didn’t set eyes on him fur so long—an’ married again. But her second husband went under soon afterward, and now No. 1’s turned up.”

“But,” asked Paul Faerot, “who is that with the Dwarf?”

“Who? Well, I dunno. Can’t imagine how them two come to be hitchin’ together. An’, by the way, Cap, you ain’t never told me how you got hold of David Dane’s will. Why didn’t you tell me that was your game when you was visitin’ me in prison?”

“I’ll tell you; and I’ll tell you what I know of this girl-woman who calls herself Dwilla St. Jean.”

“Blast my teeth! Do you know?” exclaimed Yarik, in wonder.

“Dane,” said Faerot, “was in Nashville, I suppose you know, at the time of his violent death.”

“Yes.”

“He wanted me to make some alterations in his will—I being a lawyer. He brought it to me to have a new instrument drawn up by it, and while it was in my possession, he was murdered. By chance I heard of the drowning of Nora Dufour and your arrest—”

“A fair drownd, Cap; I hadn’t no hand in it,” inserted the convict.

“Oh, I believe you are innocent, Yarik. Well, guided by the will, and observing that the child of Nora Dufour would derive immense benefit from the estate, I sought you in your prison cell, and tried to bribe you with a false prospect of getting you liberated, to tell me what you knew of Nora’s child. The will provided for all expenses incurred by the party or parties who might search for the missing heir, I also notified Shensen Layworth, by letter, of his father-in-law’s death, and the distribution of the estate. But I guess he never got it.”

“Of course not,” Yarik blurted. “His wife, this Mrs. Layworth, got it, an’ that’s why she didn’t have anything satisfactory to tell us.”

“This Dwilla St. Jean was a newsboy—”

“A newsboy?”

“Yes, in the city of New York.”

“Then it isn’t a woman?”

“Oh, yes. Wait till I explain. About the second time you were put in jail, I was in New York. You had pointed in that direction, you remember, and eluded me. Then it was I first saw the Dwarf. He was among the wharves, and signed to a newsboy who was near. I was screened from observation by a wagon, and I saw the Dwarf scribble something on a piece of paper and hand it to him:

"It's a bargain!" I heard the newsboy say. "But look—I'm a girl"—lifting the tight-fitting, greasy cap, and permitting great tresses of silken hair to fall in an opulence of flaxen gold over the shoulders.

"The Dwarf seemed delighted with the discovery, and pretty soon they hurried away. As they walked, he kept writing questions on pieces of paper, and the boy would answer by word. I was right on their heels. As fast as the boy-girl read what was on the slips, she rolled them between her thumb and fingers and cast them aside. And, one by one, I picked them up as I dogged in their rear."

"Well, blast my teeth!"

Yarik was listening with remarkable interest.

"Preserving the slips, and remembering pretty much what the disguised newsgirl's replies were, this is what I afterward made out of it:

"Have you a father and mother?"

"No."

"Have you a home?"

"Well, not much of a one."

"Would you like to become rich?"

"Yes."

"I have offered you a thousand dollars to aid me in wreaking vengeance on a line of people whom I detest, and who have deformed me. You have agreed. It may take us years. I will provide for you, and dress you handsomely in clothes suitable to your sex. Have you a hard heart?"

"I guess I can make it so."

"I like your talk. Hereafter you will call yourself Dwilla St. Jean. We are after a child who was the only child of one Nora Dufour. But I'll tell you all about our plans when we get to a hotel."

"And that's what I know about Dwilla St. Jean," concluded Faerot.

"She's a smart one, I guess."

"We've had proof of that."

"But, Cap," Yarik tapped him significantly on the shoulder, "we've euchered 'em."

"Euchered them?"

"We're one ahead of 'em."

"What do you mean?"

"You didn't see me a-gabblin' 'ith that 'ere fat porter, when I was standin' in the hall?"

"No."

"Well, I just was."

"Did you ascertain anything?"

"Well, if I didn't, then blast my teeth!"

"What?"

"A shillin's worth."

"And that was—"

"That was, that our Ytol left Wilde Manor with a individual named Somers—Lord Somers—an' he lives in Lon'on."

"Is that so?" cried Faerot.

"Every time."

"Then we haven't quite lost her yet—faster, there, driver!"

The two men lost no time in following up the clue.

But the marriage being so quiet, they only discovered the whereabouts of the couple after their departure from London. Then followed weeks in which they pursued from point to point, finally losing all trace of them.

"Back to London, Yarik," Faerot said, one day; "they'll be sure to return there."

"Drive ahead, Cap; we'll fetch up some time, I guess."

CHAPTER XXVII.

TURNING BACK.

FINETTE was active in obeying the wishes of her young mistress. Early in the morning of the next day, she contrived to see her own lover, and imparted to him the secret of affairs existing in Lord Somers's house.

She readily secured her sweetheart's promise to assist; in fact, it was arranged that he, in person, should come with a wagon, and await Finette's signal for action, when he would take the two large trunks to the depot, and guard them till Ytol and she arrived.

The desired opportunity soon came. Somers went out riding, as on the previous day, with his dashing beautiful neighbor, Miss St. Jean.

The trunks were removed by a staircase in the rear, without the knowledge of the

servants, and Finette flattered herself that she had managed things very cleverly.

Slowly dragged the day. Ytol remained in her room, counting the weary hours, scarcely partaking of any food which the maid would have pressed upon her, and striving to divert her restless fancy in the pages of a novel.

Night came; a disagreeable night, with thick-misted atmosphere and raw, chilly airs.

The light burned low in Ytol's apartment, and Finette was wrapping a heavy cloak about the shoulders of her mistress, to shield her from the damp.

"Ugh!" she whispered, shivering; "it is horrible for to meet one's lover such a time. Will madame be sure to give me the signal when I am to come to accompany her?"

"Haste, Finette—haste," she said, evading the question.

"Have courage, madame. Be brave. So. Now you are all ready."

Ytol stole noiselessly out—glanced along the entry, where all was still, then hurried toward the stairs at the back, which led to a door opening on the garden.

As she descended, looking fearfully around her in the dimly-lighted passage, a face appeared over the banisters above. It was my lord's valet. He was coming down the stairs, when his ears caught the rustle of garments, and he recognized the swiftly-gliding form that approached. Drawing back within the shadows till she passed by, he muttered:

"Oho! So Lady Somers is *stealing* out—I see that plainly in her movements. She goes to the garden—that is plain, too, or she would not select this way. To the garden, then. What does she want there? Perhaps my lord would like to see?—I would like to see, myself, since it is supposed that she met a lover in the garden, on the night of the *bal masque*. Let us pry into this."

He retraced his steps at a half-run toward the library, where he knew he would find his employer reading.

Ytol, unconscious that she had been discovered, was speeding through the garden. She pulled the cape closer round her, for the cold air was chilling her.

On she went, with fluttering heart, pausing, anon, and straining her eyes searchingly ahead in the murky surroundings.

Presently she stood beneath the trees where she had before met Wharle, and here she stopped in trepidation.

"Wharle—where are you?" she called, lowly, with a faltering voice.

"Ytol!"

He appeared like a specter in the mist, and in a second was by her side.

"I have waited an hour or more," he said, folding her to him. "You did not fix the time."

She felt stronger as his arms held her to his breast—felt as though her tired soul was dropping into a welcome haven, where there was comfort, hope, love. She recked not the wrong of her doing; she only grasped at what was a drift of sunshine through the shadows.

"Wharle," wavered tremulously from her lips, "oh! I am ready to die, I am so unhappy."

"Hush, darling. I am sorry for you. You are not content, then, with this new life?"

"It is misery to me!"

"So I feared."

"And I cannot stand it any longer, Wharle. Oh! you don't know what I've passed through since I saw you last. I met you to-night—not to say good-by forever, as I would, but to ask you, to beg you to take me away from him!"

Wharle Dufour trembled as she said this; for one moment he was speechless.

"Has he abused you?"

"He—has."

"Curse him for it!" he hissed, clinching his fists.

"Nay, Wharle, though he has treated me cruelly, he is still my husband; remember that. But I cannot live with him any more—no, no, no; I must go away. Won't you take me, Wharle? Say that you'll forgive me for what I've done, and let me have your sympathy. Take me anywhere, so it is away from him! I will be free soon; he is going to apply for divorce. And oh! I can-

not be near, for him to taunt me when he gives me my liberty."

Wharle was quivering with emotion as he listened to her pleading. The tone, so pregnant with woe, was cutting him to the very core.

Was this the once beauteous bird that he had so idolized?—flown from the realm of early allegiance, to mate with another; and now returning to him, with wings clipped, plumes bathed in tears, and tired voice robbed of song.

She clung tightly to his neck; he could feel, in his inmost soul, that she was indeed enduring too much.

It did not take him long to argue the propriety of his course. She was dear to him then; as when they roamed the woody hills in far-off Maryland. He loved her still, though that love must be chained and fettered in the tomb of buried ideals. He would protect her, though he keenly realized that she was placed beyond the reach of his affection's dream. She should not appeal in vain; and he gently smoothed her dampened brow, while he said, lowly:

"You shall go where you choose, Ytol, if you are unhappy here. I have, at least, the right to be your brother."

"Oh, thank you, Wharle—Heaven bless you!"

"When do you want to go?" he asked, tenderly.

"At once! My trunks are at the depot; I have only to follow them. Finette, my maid, expects to go with me. But she must not. This minute, Wharle—by the garden gate."

"Come, then, darling."

He took her hand in his, and they moved from the spot. But they paused instantly. Approaching footsteps arrested them, and then a form bounded in front of them.

"Halt, there, miscreant! By Heaven! I'll have your life for this outrage!"

It was Lord Somers. With an angry oath, he leaped like a madman upon Wharle, and felled him at one terrible blow with his fist.

Ytol reeled backward, fainting. She saw other forms darting in the gloom—and scarce had Somers dealt his stroke, when he, in turn, was knocked insensible from behind.

Simultaneously a thick shawl was thrown over Ytol's head, and her senses were enveloped in a double darkness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOME ONE CRIES HELP.

THE blow that felled Lord Somers was inflicted with a club, and the hand that dealt it was no sparing one.

When he recovered consciousness, he was lying across the protruding gnarl of a tree-base, on the cold, damp earth, and all around was ominously still.

Objects were indistinguishable at the distance of a few feet; and, as he lay there, for some moments bewildered, and collecting his scattered senses, he could hear the drip! drip! of wet, and the peculiar whisper that dwells among the trees on a misty, drizzly night.

Slowly gaining his feet, he glanced about, trying to penetrate the gloom; then he half-groped his way in the direction of the house.

"It was strange!—who could have struck me?" he muttered, feeling the sore wound on his head. "Curses! They may have escaped, after all. Perfidious woman! she had it well planned. Some accomplice of his, I suppose."

As he drew near, the side door was thrown open, and a smothered flow of light slanted over the grass, guiding him forward.

At the foot of the staircase stood the valet.

"Well, my lord, have you seen?"

"Enough, and twice enough!" hissed the Englishman, passing in.

The valet suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"You are bloody! You are covered with mud! What has happened, my lord?"

"Don't question me"—snappishly: "Has Lady Somers returned?"

"She did not come this way—"

"And you have watched?"

"Faithfully, since you went out."

Somers continued up the stairs. He went straight to Ytol's apartment and wrenched

the door open with a fierce jerk. Then he paused.

Finette was seated in the center of the room on a small traveling sack.

His abrupt entrance, the blood upon his face, the frown that knit his brow, the mud upon his garments, and the haggard, angry look he fixed upon her—these startled her, and she sprang up, shrinking before him.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "Where are you going at this time of night, and with a sachel? Speak!"

For a second she stared at him guiltily.

"Oh, my lord, you will forgive. I was running away. I do not like it here. I would fly from—"

"Run away?—yes, with your mistress! I see it all. Where is Lady Somers?"

"I cannot say—"

"You cannot say!" But, do you know?"

"No, no, no; I do not. I swear to it. Have you seen her?"

"I have—"

"Oh! then where is she?" cried Finette, simulating great anxiety. "To-night she lie down early, and when I come to her bedside, she is gone. I fear madame walks in her sleep. It is terrible. Some hurt will befall her. Oh! where is she?—where is madame?" She wrung her hands in affected grief, then hid her face and sobbed most naturally.

But he was not to be deceived.

"You are a vile schemer!" he exclaimed, striding forward and grasping her by the arm. "Tell me where your mistress is?"

"Indeed I do not know. I cannot say. I fear—"

"By Heaven! I'll help you to tell the truth," he snarled, in a rage, and quickly transferring his hold to her throat. "Tell me now—speak, or I'll choke you!"

"Mercy! Mercy, my lord!" she gasped, sinking down.

His savage grip was strangling her.

"Will you tell me?"

"I know not! I know not!" gurgled from the choking throat.

His face was contorted fearfully as he held her quivering there, his bloody matted hair and stained features giving him a ferocious mien. He suspected that Finette knew well of her mistress's perfidy. She was lying to him. He would compel her to speak the truth.

Tighter closed the deadly grip. Her face was purpling—then he slightly loosed the coiling fingers that she might articulate.

"Mercy!" she begged, with a struggling accent.

He suddenly let her go and started back. A faint scream reached his ears, coming—from where he could not decide.

Finette also heard it.

"It is she! It is madame! I know her voice. Oh, my poor madame! She is killed, perhaps. Oh! oh! oh!"

And while they listened for a repetition of the outcry there was another sound.

Clink! tink! tink-a-tink! Clink! tink! tink! as if from the surrounding walls.

"What does this mean, Finette?"

"It is in the next house. So strange. This tink! tink! I have heard it every night for a long time before my lord returns from the tour with madame. It has been so all the time since, this hammer, hammer, hammer."

And again from the wall:

Clink! tink! clink! tink-a-tink! clink!

"What can they be doing in there?"

"So strange."

"It sounds like some one shaping iron upon an anvil."

"It must be. But what can they have for an anvil in there?" wondered Finette.

At that juncture, and mingling with the mysterious rapping which seemed to issue from the adjoining house, there was a pattering of horse-hoofs outside, as of some one hurrying up, spurring swiftly, despite the fact of the night being so dark that it was difficult to keep the path.

To this Somers and the maid also listened; and the continual hammering beyond the wall, which excited their curiosity, and the coming horseman, whose arrival surprised him because he did not expect visitors, and his own undecided condition of mind relative to suspicions which he allowed himself to fasten on Finette, all these combined, as it were, held him in a state of hesitation, as to whether he should again seize the deceitful

maid, or whether he should descend and see who had ridden out there on such a night, or whether he should inquire into the cause of that woman's scream and the singular clink! tink! tink! tink! which followed it, and was now sounding in his ears.

While in this mood of indecision, a servant appeared in the doorway.

"Visitors in the parlor, my lord," he announced.

"What names?"

"One said 'Faerot,' and one said 'Yarik,' and both said 'it's urgent.'"

"I will come at once. Stay—Have you seen Lady Somers to-night?"

"No, my lord."

Somers bestowed a scowl upon the maid, and followed the servant from the room. When he had bathed his wounded head—putting on a smoking-cap to hide its disfigurement—and arranged his disordered attire, he descended and was ushered and bowed in to his visitors.

"Excuse the lateness of the hour," said Faerot, arising and saluting politely, "but our business, sir, is of great importance."

Yarik was seated to one side, his slouch hat hung on his knee, and stroking his grizzled beard he surveyed them.

"Waive an apology; it is unnecessary. Please state your object."

"You recently wedded with a young girl named Ytol Lyn, did you not?"

"Yes."

"I am invested with the power of executor by the will of her grandfather, David Dane. She derives large benefit from this will. We have had quite a search after her, to apprise her of her good fortune. I suppose she has told you that her name is not Lyn?"

"No, she has not. I ascertained it, however," replied Somers, who was interested.

"Her early life, I believe, has been involved in some obscurity—"

"One moment: was this David Dane—who you say was her grandfather—once a diamond merchant in London?"

"Yes; and an American."

"My father knew him well. You say he died and left his grandchild, Ytol, a fortune?"

"A more than fortune. We almost caught up with the heir, at Wilde Manor, near Liverpool, where we saw her aunt, Mrs. Layworth—"

"Her aunt?"

"Yes."

"Is Mrs. Layworth her aunt?" exclaimed the astonished Edglishman.

Faerot proceeded to give him a few items proving Ytol's identity. Somers's surprise increased as he listened.

"But, will you be kind enough to summon your wife? We had best talk it over with her present. I would like to see her."

Somers grew uneasy. He shifted his position restlessly, half-rose, and sat down again, saying:

"My dear sirs, I cannot conceal a disagreeable fact from you, considering the mission that brings you here. I might as well be plain. My house is disgraced. Lady Somers has—"

The sentence was unfinished. Ere he could speak further, they were startled by a shriek on the night without—a shriek so loud, long and piercing that their blood fairly curdled.

"Blast my teeth!" snorted Yarik. "Did you ever hear that, Cap?"

In the same breath, Somers's valet rushed in, wildly excited.

"My lord! My lord!" he panted.

"What is that?"

"There's being murder done in the next house. Hear!—there it is again. Don't you know the voice, my lord?"

"Whose is it?"

"Why, it's Lady Somers—"

"Lady Somers!"

"Hark!—yes, it's her voice."

"Help! Help! Help!" echoed dully through the still air outside.

Then all was hushed.

Somers bounded away, followed by Faerot. But Hoyle Yarik was ahead of them. The latter leaped the stone wall separating the two lots—ascended the steps—kicked open the door, and darted up the staircase.

The cries had ceased. But he felt that some fearful deed was in progress, and,

drawing a revolver from his bosom, he dashed on.

When Lord Somers withdrew, and left Finette alone, she ran to the window and threw open the blinds, with the ostensible view of escaping by the high vine-trellis against the wall. But she staggered back, frightenedly.

There was a small rail balcony to the window, and on this balcony, pale, bare-headed and staring at her, was Wharle Dufour.

"It is madame's lover!" she cried.

He strode in and up to her.

"Where is your mistress, girl?"

"Alas, I cannot tell! Have you not seen her? Oh! I fear for her—poor madame; something has harmed her!"

"I met her in the garden half an hour ago," Wharle said, speaking in a rapid, husky tone. "We were about to escape, when we were discovered and I was struck insensible. When I recovered, she was gone. Did she not come back here?"

"No—no—no!" Finette moaned, clasping her hands in genuine anxiety.

"Hark!—what is that cry?"

The scream that startled these below rung in his ears at this moment.

"Oh, it is madame! They are killing her—"

"They! Who?"

"She must be in next door—the other fine house. And they—"

Wharle sprang back toward the window. But Finette caught him by the arm.

"Not that way. Come with me—I show you. Come. Oh! poor madame—poor madame!" She ran from the room and along the hall, till they reached the narrow, ladder like stairs that led to the roof.

"Up! up!" she urged. "Poor madame! They are killing her!"

They ascended to the roof, and she pulled him across to a skylight, which was shining with the rays of lamps beneath.

In a second they were by this and looking down; in another second they recoiled with a shudder of horror.

The sight they saw was enough to stay the pulsing of their hearts.

"Oh, God!" groaned Wharle Dufour, clapping his hands to his eyes to shut out the horrible vision.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT BAY.

As Ytol sunk unconscious and limp in the arms of the figure that threw the shawl over her head, the first figure—the one that had struck down Lord Somers—bounded toward her and lifted her from the earth as though she were but a child.

The two then glided swiftly away until they reached the wall separating the two gardens. Here they passed through a sort of embrasure, into the next property; the one carrying Ytol—and who was a man—running ahead, and the other—who was a female—following closely.

Into the house, by a narrow entrance; then up several flights of stairs, through a long, dim-lighted hallway, finally pausing at the door of a room in the third story—and this room the one next to that in which Finette was seated at the moment, and from beyond whose wall had come the enigmatic sounds arousing the curiosity of those who heard.

The apartment was large, square, high-ceilinged, carpetless, bare of furniture—with slight exception—and with windows tightly closed.

At one side was a plain couch, and on this couch Ytol was laid by her captors, Dwilla St. Jean and the Dwarf.

But we look further.

Near the center of the rear wall there was once a fireplace. This had been torn out and rebuilt, so as to arrange a blacksmith's furnace, with bellows and all complete in miniature. Before the furnace several sheets of iron to protect the inflammable flooring from sparks; and on the improvised covering a polished anvil, with hammers, pincers, and punches leaning against it.

Directly in front of the whole was a rude, stout chair, with a high, straight back, curving abruptly at the top, with a groove for the neck, and which, by close scrutiny, we discover to be riveted to the boards. About it dangled buckling-straps, and behind it was a

screw to adjust the top piece for the head of whoever should sit in it.

After depositing his burden on the bed, Catdjo stepped to the furnace and grasped the bellows-handle.

The wind hissed through the funnel, the coals brightened, and flames and sparks shot up the dark chimney.

As the blaze increased and lighted up his foul face, it imparted a demon hideousness to every lineament, finding reflection in his Satanic orbs and glistening along the rows of his white teeth.

Dwilla was bending over their captive.

"See, Catdjo—she revives."

The Dwarf grunted, but did not remove his gaze from the fire. Slow and steady he pumped the wind and fanned the flames, till the heating heap began to murmur sullenly.

Just then Ytol started up. It seemed as if she was herself in a second—perhaps an intuition of pending danger, the awful peril menacing her, startled the brain to wakefulness and terror.

"Miss St. Jean!"

"Yes, it is I. You see, we have you again."

"Have me! What place is this? What am I doing here?—tell me."

"Does not this scene recall the night upon the yacht? Ha!—lie still there, if you know when you are well off! You cannot escape. My question: do you remember, I stood by you, though I was masked, as I am standing now?"

Those glittering brown eyes were fixed venomously upon her; Dwilla was smiling—a strange, mocking smile—and displaying her beautiful teeth locked, as if ready to grate harshly.

"Can you recollect what I said to you then?" she asked.

"You sought my life!"

"Yes," eagerly.

"You were bearing me to my doom!"

"Yes, yes," eager again.

"You showed me that you were *monsters*! I was to die! There was no hope—"

"Yes—yes—and it is the same now!"

"No!"

"Yes, I say. You are once more in our power. You need not hope for mercy! Look—have you seen *him*?" She pointed toward the flaring furnace.

"Do you recognize *him*—your enemy?"

Ytol's heart sunk. A sense of fear more biting than the grip of death itself seized her, causing her mind to whirl dizzily; involuntarily her eyes closed to shut out the dread apparition.

"Merciful heavens! it is the Dwarf!"

"Ay, it is he. You thought you would get away from him that night of the storm, when we were both swept away by the waves. When the steamship *Petrel* stopped to save you from a watery grave, the vessel's bows were almost riding through his skull. He was on board *before you were*! Ha! ha! ha! And like yourself, I was picked up, later in the day, by a Bristol packet. But look at him—look again! Do you know who he is? Your uncle, Ytol Dufour—your uncle! Ha! ha! ha!"

"My uncle! Impossible!" gasped Ytol, mystified in her terror.

"Your uncle, I repeat. He is Shensen Layworth, the husband of your aunt, with whom you were employed as governess, at Wilde Manor. I have bidden you mark his deformity; I have told you that he was made the hideous thing he is by your father. It was through your mother—at her instigation, do you hear? He loved her; he was following her from England to America when she set her husband on him, as a ruffian sets one dog upon another. Your baby eyes saw the whole of it. He will have vengeance—vengeance on you, the child of the woman he first loved, then hated with all his heart! And *such* revenge! Ha! ha! ha!"

The girl-fiend's tone rung like a knell in Ytol's ears; and the Dwarf turned his shaggy head and grinned diabolically.

"Oh! Heaven help me!" cried Ytol, glancing from one to the other. "There is murder in your faces. I see it—"

"Call on Heaven. It alone can aid you."

And the Dwarf chuckled, gutturally.

"What inhuman punishment am I to suffer for my father's deeds?"

"Do you see that chair?"

"Yes." She faltered, looking in the direction indicated.

"Note the straps on it—see—you are to sit there."

"Sit there! For what?"

"You are to be fastened there; strapped down, so that you cannot stir a nerve. Do you begin to comprehend? Then we can do as we please with you. No mercy, Ytol Dufour—no mercy!"

Ytol's blood was icing. She quivered from head to foot. A cold sweat beaded on her pallid brow, and the whiteness of death settled in her face.

She easily divined, now, that some excruciating torture was in store; she saw no hope, no relenting in the incarnate fiends who taunted her. But she had yet to realize the full atrocity of their intended crime!

"Your father deformed and disfigured Shensen Layworth," continued Dwilla St. Jean; "so are you to be disfigured in such a way that, if you survive it at all, your life will be a curse to you; you will be reviled and spit upon, and jeered at, as *he* has been, till you shall pray for death to stop the miseries of your existence!"

Then to the Dwarf:

"Fan the fire, Catdjo!—fan the fire!"

He ceased using the bellows, however, as she spoke. And out of the molten mass he drew a glowing object, a piece of iron which he held up for a second, on the tongs.

"Look there! Can you guess what that is?—a mask! Catdjo has been working on it for weeks to perfect it. It is for you to wear! *We are going to put it on you red hot!*"

In an instant the hellish plan burst upon Ytol. She saw it all.

At a leap she left the bed, uttering a wild despairing shriek—the shriek that penetrated to the ears of Somers and Finette.

Dwilla caught her violently—she was the stronger—and forced her back upon the couch pinioning down her arms.

"Go on, Catdjo; I can hold her."

He took up the hammer from behind the anvil, and—

Clink! clink! tink-a-tink! clink! tink! he pounded away with alacrity.

But Ytol heard not. Her senses had deserted her. She lay quiet in her captor's hold, and Dwilla saw that she had fainted.

Deeming their victim safe, she turned to watch the Dwarf at his operation of shaping the horrible mask.

"Let her lay," she said, "she will not recover before you are ready."

For some time there was no sound but the clink! tink! tink! of the dancing hammer. Catdjo grew warm over the task, his great basilisk eyes protruding as they bent upon the tongs which he twisted in his hand, and the work which he moved here and there on the anvil.

Then Dwilla vented a cry of surprise, and wheeled suddenly around.

Ytol had sprung from the bed, and was making toward the window. At one superhuman wrench she tore open the massive hutters and flung them wide; shriek after shriek issued from her lips, piercing far through the murk and mist.

She was dragged struggling back by Dwilla, while the Dwarf refastened the shutters.

But she was battling for her life. All the double strength wrought by her keen alarm steeled her tender muscles, and she fought with fist and nail to keep them off.

"Let me out! Let me go!" she screamed, as Dwilla was staggered for a second by her desperate attack. "You shall not kill me!—wretches! Let me go!"

Catdjo grinned in mockery of her frantic resistance, and his brawny arms glided round her, holding her helpless.

With a quick motion Dwilla thrust a handkerchief into her mouth, and she was carried to the chair before the furnace.

The straps were buckled across her waist, breast, arms and limbs, and her head was set rigidly in the fixture at the back.

And while Dwilla leered upon her, in her hopeless condition, Catdjo returned to his work.

"Quick!" exclaimed the girl. "Those shrieks may have been heard. We have no time to lose."

Clink! tink! clink! tink! faster went the hammer—that terrible sound whose every stroke vibrated on the stricken soul of the

listening captive. And while the dull ringing thuds reverberated in Ytol's ears, she was straining in her bonds—straining till her white face turned to a purple red, and the delicate veins corded on her forehead.

There was a heaven of appeal in her startled blue eyes; their glance might have melted images of stone; and the lips, rendered voiceless by the choking gag, were striving to mold a prayer for mercy.

But the two fiends heeded not. Only more demonish they appeared; and Catdjo's swarthy visage of night grew gleeful as the work he was at neared completion.

Scarce a dozen seconds elapsed when he vented a gibbering shout. The mask was finished. He took it up between a pair of tongs and advanced upon the victim.

"Haste! Haste!" Dwilla urged, bending forward to watch the effect upon Ytol.

The Dwarf drew nigher as if enjoying a delay, and thus prolonging the torture.

Nearer and nearer it came—that mask of iron, still red, and breathing its smothering, scorching heat on Ytol's face. Already her flesh was creeping.

But he paused, with the iron not more than a dozen inches from the pinioned head.

Heavy footsteps were tramping on the stairs, and the murmur of excited voices fell upon their ears.

"Ply the iron! Ply the iron!" she hissed, springing to the door and shooting the thick bolt into its socket.

Again the Dwarf moved near.

"Let them rescue her when she is burned! Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Dwilla.

Nigher came the iron. Even in that moment when he knew that rescuers were at hand, the Dwarf could not smother his frenzy of delight in lengthening the torment. Inch by inch he approached, with the mask outstretched.

Ytol's skin was burning, contracting, blistering in the fierce heat. It was almost touching her. And now the blessed respite of unconsciousness closed her eyes. She saw no more—her vision darkened with one final glance of shuddering horror at the fiery mask.

Then there was a loud cry, followed by a terrific crash, and Dwilla St. Jean reeled backward, half-knocked from her feet by a falling body.

With a swimming brain she saw Catdjo rolling on the floor, the figure of a man locked in his long, serpentine arms—biting, gouging, tearing, and coiling, bending, struggling with some desperate foe.

Simultaneously the door crashed inward, and over it bounded Hoyle Yarik, with revolver leveled and ready to deal death.

"Heyr's thunder!" he bellowed. "Hold on there, blast yer teeth!"

Somers and Faerot were on the convict's heels.

The Dwarf had escaped his antagonist. He sprung to the wall and stood at bay. In his grimed hand, too, shone the polished barrel of a pistol, which he aimed at Yarik.

Beset and wild, Dwilla flashed forth her sharp dagger, and held the glistening blade ready to strike.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THROUGH THE PORTALS.

NONE too soon this interruption to the awful scene.

Rousing from the apathy of horror which bound him—fully comprehending the dreadful peril encompassing his beloved Ytol—Wharle Dufour cast himself down through the skylight, amid showering glass, and alighted on the devil's form below.

A minute more, and the red-hot mask of iron would have been eating, crisping, shriveling and charring the tender flesh of the hopeless victim.

A howl of rage, a baying scream, and Catdjo let fall the horrible instrument of torture and, perhaps, death, and clinched with the unexpected adversary. He tore and fought with those claws of hands, coiling, striking, gouging with arms and limbs, exerting all his ferocious strength in the desperate struggle; for his antagonist was nerved to a giant's muscle, frenzied and mad in the power of fear for Ytol's life.

But the appearance of others checked their combat ere its issue.

The Dwarf, realizing that he was cornered, loosed himself from Wharle's tenacious hug,

and sprung backward, confronting his enemies.

Twice demoniac he seemed in that moment.

His long, dark, matted hair was disheveled and tangled round the ill-shapen head like knotty serpents; his swarthy, hyena visage was wet and glistening with perspiration. His nose, more perceptibly hooked, was like the beak of a swooping hawk, projecting between eyes of flame and wild glitter, and curving over lips that drew apart and showed the rows of white, gritting teeth. The tongueless mouth gibbered sounds like curses of fury; the hand that leveled the pistol was quivering with passion; and the orbs that shone and scintillated through his straggling hair-locks glanced hate and defiance upon them.

For a brief space it was a rigid tableau.

Then the voice of Somers:

"Shoot him! Shoot him down!"

Yarik's revolver blazed and cracked. The Dwarf shrunk quick and close to the wall, as the bullet stung in its mark.

Again the revolver—but in the same instant Catdjo's weapon spoke.

There was a cutting shriek of agony in the doorway, and Somers sunk into the arms of Faerot, who was in the act of using his own revolver for the annihilation of the hideous spider before them.

At the same time Catdjo staggered forward a step, holding, stretching and shaking his long arms aloft—then fell headlong to the floor, his deformed body writhing and squirming in the throes of death.

Dwilla had stood like a statue during the deadly duel; but when she saw the Dwarf go down under the fire of his enemies, she turned to escape. Hurling her dagger at the convict, and half-screened by the smoke which clouded the apartment, she darted toward what appeared to be the door of a closet.

"Catch her! Catch her!" screamed Finette, who was peering over the edge of the skylight above.

Yarik dodged the gleaming missile, and sent a shot after her. Then he dashed forward in pursuit. But when he broke through the thin door, and found himself in a large room beyond, Dwilla St. Jean had disappeared—disappeared forever.

Ytol was lying on the bed when the convict returned, and Wharle was bending anxiously over her, calling her name.

Faerot beckoned Yarik to him. He was kneeling and supporting the head of the Englishman.

"He's dead, Yarik."

"Dead, Cap?"

"See that!" and he pointed to a ghastly, bleeding hole in the forehead, where the red, warm blood was oozing out and over the marbled face.

Yarik slowly uncovered his head. Glancing toward the lifeless carcass behind him, and scowling at it, while he clinched his fists, he muttered:

"Blast his teeth! He was a devil to the last!"

Then a low, wavering accent:

"Wharle! Oh, Wharle! is it you?"

"I, darling. You are saved. You are with friends—"

"Where is Lord Somers? I saw him—he was coming, too—I—"

"Lord Somers is dead," answered Paul Faerot, in a deep, solemn voice.

"Dead? Dead, you say?" She raised to her elbow on the couch, half-supported by Wharle, and stared at the still corpse.

"Dead? Dead?" she repeated, slowly.

He drew her head to his breast, and imprinted a soft kiss on her brow.

There were others who now made up the strange tableau. The servants, alarmed by the unusual and significant sounds, had rushed in from the next house, and were crowding, motionless and gasping, in the doorway.

Silence reigned, unbroken and awful. And as the small fire in the furnace moldered slowly out, the apartment became gradually darker and darker, with a weird, gloomy halo flickering spectrally over them all.

Ho! for America. Back to the fair soil of the free—back on the bosom of love, drinking the joys of calm.

More than two weeks had elapsed since the foregoing scenes of this chapter.

A gallant vessel was steaming into the Channel, and a happy group lingered on her deck, bidding adieu to the fading shores of England: Paul Faerot and Hoyle Yarik, Wharle Dufour and Ytol—the last reunited at a grave, these two long-separated hearts once more beating in a mingled pulse.

The news of the startling end of Lord Egbert Somers had flown to Wilde Manor; but Mrs. Layworth did not go down to London. Being apprised, also, of her husband's death, she dispatched a messenger after the body. Neither she nor her daughter ever again met Ytol; and Ione married shortly subsequent to the interment of her father, from whose hideous shape, as it lay in its coffin, she had turned away with shuddering abhorrence.

Though the will of David Dane gave much to induce Ytol to remain in England, she preferred Wharle's offer of a quiet home, even in the vicinity of her early trials.

Dane, too, had bought valuable property in Tennessee, during his brief sojourn there, and Faerot—who had long ago acquainted Ytol with her history and that of her relatives—was to dispose of this in her interests on his return to Nashville.

Yarik followed the lawyer, who started homeward immediately upon arriving in the United States, and, through Faerot's influence, obtained a position, which he retained creditably for many years. Faerot exerted himself to establish Yarik's innocence, and after several months succeeded in exonerating him from the supposed murder of Nora Dufour.

The fire burned cheerily on Farmer Lyn's hearthstone, warming the sitting-room cozily, while the winter winds moaned outside among the naked trees.

Mother Lyn sat by her husband's side, in front of the bright burning logs, and she seemed lost in reflection as she stared vacantly into the flames.

"So, our little Ytol's come back again!" murmured father Lyn, abstractedly. "And who'd 'a' thought that she was to turn out the niece of old Gerald Dufour? With so much money, too! They'll make the farm jump, I reckon, now that Wharle's taken a hold again. Well, well, I'm right glad," smiling and slowly nodding his head in a pleased way.

"And Wharle's her own cousin, father Lyn."

"True, he is—true, he is."

"But, I don't approve of cousins marrying," she declared.

"Pshaw! Why, it makes no difference, mother Lyn; cousins have married before this, and I've known some of the happiest marriages among 'em. They did it in our time; and the world to-day isn't half so particular as it was."

"I suppose she won't notice us now," said mother Lyn, in a tone of doubt and part of vexation.

She was wondering whether she deserved the friendship of the former victim to her disposition.

"Yes, she will, mother Lyn—yes, she will!" exclaimed the farmer. "I met her on the road this morning, coming from Bud Villa post-office, in her carriage. And how pretty she's grown to be!—prettier than when she lived with us, which is saying a great deal. She looked just as happy as a bird; and young Wharle's proud of her as if she was a princess."

"Did she speak?" inquired Rebecca, hesitatingly.

"Speak! Why, she stopped the carriage, and stayed there near a quarter of an hour talking just as sweet as music. She's coming over to see us to-morrow, and take dinner."

"I don't know that I care to meet her," wavered the wife.

He glanced at her covertly; then, with a nod:

"Don't you fret about the past, mother Lyn; that's all buried. She's not the one to cherish a grudge toward anybody—she never was. Her heart's as good as a lump of gold; and she won't ever think of that—up there—if you don't remind her of it."

He pointed to a wooden pin in the wall by the fireplace, and Rebecca's face turned red as she looked in the direction indicated. For there hung the long, slim strap that, in other days, her hand had used upon the suffering child, Ytol.

She arose quickly, snatched the strap from its hook, and went out of the room. What she did with it Herbert Lyn never knew—nor did he ask; but it vanished.

And the next day Ytol appeared at the Lyn farm, with Wharle. She came in, rosy and beautiful, and muffled in volumes of furs, radiant and fairy-like.

Into the old, familiar sitting-room she glided, and then she sprung to Herbert Lyn's arms, like a child seeking rest in parental embrace.

He smoothed her brow with his great, coarse hand, and tears rolled down his bronzed cheeks.

"God bless you, little Ytol!" he stammered, gasping the words with all the overpowering joy he felt. "I always loved you, child, and I'm glad that you are happy now."

"You *did* love me, father Lyn, when my life was dark and full of woe. You loved me, when Heaven knows, I needed it, for it was all I had here. God bless you too, father Lyn."

Ytol was weeping. She could not keep back the tide of emotion roused by this meeting in her childhood's happy home.

It was an impressive scene. And the ordeal was yet to come.

Rebecca Lyn stood near in waiting; it was not for long.

Ytol turned to her, pausing a moment to wipe away the hot tears, then wound her arms around her neck.

"Mother Lyn"—her voice was choked and sobbing, "I love you, mother Lyn. Once, perhaps, you were unkind. But I *forget* it now. We are all so very, very happy, you must love me, too. Won't you kiss me, mother Lyn?"

It was a full forgiveness. Rebecca hesitated for a second, doubtful whether she deserved it. Then she gazed into the affectionate eyes, and kissed the upturned lips.

The clouds were broken away, and the sunlight of peace and happiness was shining from above. The portals had been closed for long, but they opened at last to greet the sweet flow of affection's dream.

Mrs. Dufour did not remain long to witness the flood-tide of bliss that settled now on the mutual life of Wharle and Ytol. She was laid to sleep beside her husband in the village churchyard, and the estate came into Wharle's possession.

Children grew around them; and day by day the love that gladdened their home grew too.

Ytol did not delay writing to Isabel Dufour, to inform her of all that had happened. And soon there was a letter from Rose Grove—a letter glowing with amazement and delight. Isabel and Harry hastened to see their lost friend; and with them came another; the shaggy Newfoundland dog, Carlo!

Ytol caressed the rough-looking fellow with weeping eyes; and he—

"De dog done gone mad fo' shuah!" shouted the negro, Charcoal, who attended the visitors.

"No!" cried Ytol, "not mad; only overjoyed, as I am."

Harry learned from Ytol the sad fate of his friend Jerome. He had missed seeing an account of the wrecking of the Petrel in American waters.

"Poor fellow," he uttered, sadly; "he was a dear friend of mine."

"And I loved him—as a brother," added the young wife.

"And I'm an old maid yet, Tolly!" exclaimed Isabel. "Hal says I'm doomed to be a dried lemon!"

But what of Jeremy Coddle? Did he die by the bullet of Hoyle Yarik's pistol? No. He recovered from an almost fatal wound, and fled in fear for his life, when he knew that his dreaded acquaintance was at large.

He was seen by Faerot and Yarik, some years later, in the streets at Memphis. They dogged him. But he discovered them, and eluded their pursuit, disappearing for all time.

Our two friends frequently visited Wharle and Ytol, on their fine farm near the Chesapeake. Hoyle was idolized by the children, whom he took upon his knee, and to whom he related wonderful stories of ship and sea.

And he said to Faerot:

"Just the finest pair of young 'uns ever I see, Cap; blast my teeth if they ain't!"

THE END.

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